

The Magi From Texas | Soldiers and Suicide | The Gift of Life

# THE AMERICAN Legion

\$2.50 DECEMBER 2009

[www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

*The maga*



FOR GOD AND COUNTRY SINCE 1919

**IMAGINE THIS BLISTERING RASH ALONG WITH STABBING PAIN**



**AND YOU'LL HAVE AN IDEA OF  
WHAT IT CAN BE LIKE TO HAVE SHINGLES.**



For more information on the availability of ZOSTAVAX through the Merck Vaccine Patient Assistance Program, visit [www.merck.com/merckhelps](http://www.merck.com/merckhelps) or call 1-877-9 SHINGLES.

## **IF YOU HAD CHICKENPOX AS A CHILD, YOU COULD GET SHINGLES NOW.**

### **The chickenpox virus is still in your body.**

It can resurface as Shingles, a painful, blistering rash. The Shingles rash usually lasts up to 30 days, and for most the pain lessens as the rash heals. But some people who develop Shingles experience long-term pain that can last for months, even years.

### **ZOSTAVAX is a vaccine that can help prevent Shingles.**

ZOSTAVAX is used to prevent Shingles in adults 60 years of age or older. Once you reach age 60, the sooner you get vaccinated, the better your chances of protecting yourself from Shingles. ZOSTAVAX is given as a single shot. ZOSTAVAX cannot be used to treat Shingles, or the nerve pain that may follow Shingles, once you have it. Talk to your health care professional to see if ZOSTAVAX is right for you.

### **Important Safety Information**

ZOSTAVAX may not fully protect everyone who gets the vaccine. You should not get ZOSTAVAX if you are allergic to any of its ingredients, including gelatin and neomycin, have a weakened immune system, take high doses of steroids, or are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. Possible side effects include redness, pain, itching, swelling, warmth, or bruising at the injection site, as well as headache. You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch) or call 1-800-FDA-1088. Before getting vaccinated, talk to your health care professional about situations you may need to avoid after getting ZOSTAVAX. Please see the Patient Product Information on the adjacent page.

Before you get **Shingles**, ask about ZOSTAVAX.

**ZOSTAVAX®**  
Zoster Vaccine Live

[www.zostavax.com](http://www.zostavax.com)

9815608

**Patient Information about  
ZOSTAVAX® (pronounced "ZOS tah vax")  
Generic name: Zoster Vaccine Live**

You should read this summary of information about ZOSTAVAX<sup>1</sup> before you are vaccinated. If you have any questions about ZOSTAVAX after reading this leaflet, you should ask your health care provider. This information does not take the place of talking about ZOSTAVAX with your doctor, nurse, or other health care provider. Only your health care provider can decide if ZOSTAVAX is right for you.

**What is ZOSTAVAX and how does it work?**

ZOSTAVAX is a vaccine that is used for adults 60 years of age or older to prevent shingles (also known as zoster).

ZOSTAVAX contains a weakened chickenpox virus (varicella-zoster virus).

ZOSTAVAX works by helping your immune system protect you from getting shingles. If you do get shingles even though you have been vaccinated, ZOSTAVAX may help prevent the nerve pain that can follow shingles in some people.

ZOSTAVAX may not protect everyone who gets the vaccine. ZOSTAVAX cannot be used to treat shingles once you have it.

**What do I need to know about shingles and the virus that causes it?**

Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. Once you have had chickenpox, the virus can stay in your nervous system for many years. For reasons that are not fully understood, the virus may become active again and give you shingles. Age and problems with the immune system may increase your chances of getting shingles.

Shingles is a rash that is usually on one side of the body. The rash begins as a cluster of small red spots that often blister. The rash can be painful. Shingles rashes usually last up to 30 days and, for most people, the pain associated with the rash lessens as it heals.

**Who should not get ZOSTAVAX?**

You should not get ZOSTAVAX if you:

- are allergic to any of its ingredients.
- are allergic to gelatin or neomycin.
- have a weakened immune system (for example, an immune deficiency, leukemia, lymphoma, or HIV/AIDS).
- take high doses of steroids by injection or by mouth.
- are pregnant or plan to get pregnant.

You should not get ZOSTAVAX to prevent chickenpox.

Children should not get ZOSTAVAX.

**How is ZOSTAVAX given?**

ZOSTAVAX is given as a single dose by injection under the skin.

**What should I tell my health care provider before I get ZOSTAVAX?**

You should tell your health care provider if you:

- have or have had any medical problems.
- take any medicines, including nonprescription medicines, and dietary supplements.
- have any allergies, including allergies to neomycin or gelatin.
- had an allergic reaction to another vaccine.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- are breast-feeding.

Tell your health care provider if you expect to be in close contact (including household contact) with newborn infants, someone who may be pregnant and has not had chickenpox or been vaccinated against chickenpox, or someone who has problems with their immune system. Your health care provider can tell you what situations you may need to avoid.

**What are the possible side effects of ZOSTAVAX?**

The most common side effects that people in the clinical studies reported after receiving the vaccine include:

- redness, pain, itching, swelling, warmth, or bruising where the shot was given.
- headache.

The following additional side effects have been reported in general use with ZOSTAVAX:

- allergic reactions, which may be serious and may include difficulty in breathing or swallowing. If you have an allergic reaction, call your doctor right away.
- fever
- hives at the injection site
- joint pain
- muscle pain
- rash
- rash at the injection site
- swollen glands near the injection site (that may last a few days to a few weeks)

Tell your health care provider if you have any new or unusual symptoms after you receive ZOSTAVAX.

**What are the ingredients of ZOSTAVAX?**

Active Ingredient: a weakened form of the varicella-zoster virus.

Inactive Ingredients: sucrose, hydrolyzed porcine gelatin, sodium chloride, monosodium L-glutamate, sodium phosphate dibasic, potassium phosphate monobasic, potassium chloride.

**What else should I know about ZOSTAVAX?**

Vaccinees and their health care providers are encouraged to call (800) 986-8999 to report any exposure to ZOSTAVAX during pregnancy.

This leaflet summarizes important information about ZOSTAVAX.

If you would like more information, talk to your health care provider or visit the website at [www.ZOSTAVAX.com](http://www.ZOSTAVAX.com) or call 1-800-622-4477.

**Rx only**

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# click here

*Where to go and what to find in The American Legion's electronic media*

**OPERATION  
comfort  
WARRIOR**

**"As we progressed down the street, cars would pull over and people on the streets would wave. It is impressive the reputation the Riders in Kansas have with the public."**

National Commander Clarence Hill,  
via clarencehill.legion.org



## COP Keating Relief Fund

[www.legion.org/troops](http://www.legion.org/troops)

The American Legion Burn Pit's COP Keating Relief Fund, CSC and Target Corp. generated more than \$150,000 in cash and merchandise. See photos and video at **burnpit.legion.org** and on LegionTV.

## Student filmmakers

[www.legion.org/legiontv](http://www.legion.org/legiontv)

Norwich University cadets discuss their documentary, "The War at Home."

**See more video programs at**

**LEGION TV**



[www.legion.org/legiontv](http://www.legion.org/legiontv)

## Online donations help hospitalized troops

[www.legion.org/donate](http://www.legion.org/donate)

Operation Comfort Warriors helps to purchase comfort items for U.S. troops recovering from combat wounds and illnesses. The fund has provided items ranging from sweat suits to video-game players at various military hospitals since 2008, when it was launched. The program has expanded this year with a goal of raising \$100,000 by Jan. 1.

## Clip it, and click it

The American Legion's new Web site is making domain names easier to enter and remember. Some names have changed since the transition to the new site Nov. 9. Here is a handy chart of names to clip out and keep near your computer. Visitors also will find easy search functions at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org).

<b>Baseball</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/baseball">http://www.legion.org/baseball</a>
<b>National Convention</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/convention">http://www.legion.org/convention</a>
<b>Legion Riders</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/riders">http://www.legion.org/riders</a>
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<b>Shooting Sports</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/shooting">http://www.legion.org/shooting</a>
<b>Boys Nation/Boys State</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/boysnation">http://www.legion.org/boysnation</a>
<b>Citizenship</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/citizenship">http://www.legion.org/citizenship</a>
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<b>Legislative Action Center</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/legislative">http://www.legion.org/legislative</a>
<b>National Oratorical Contest</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/oratorical">http://www.legion.org/oratorical</a>
<b>Boy Scouts of America</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/scouting">http://www.legion.org/scouting</a>
<b>The Landing Zone</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/landingzone">http://www.legion.org/landingzone</a>
<b>Family Support Network</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/familysupport">http://www.legion.org/familysupport</a>
<b>National Emergency Fund</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/emergency">http://www.legion.org/emergency</a>
<b>Scholarships</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/scholarships">http://www.legion.org/scholarships</a>
<b>Troop Support</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/troops">http://www.legion.org/troops</a>
<b>VA Volunteer Services</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/volunteers">http://www.legion.org/volunteers</a>
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<b>Contacts</b>	<a href="http://www.legion.org/contact">http://www.legion.org/contact</a>



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## ON THE COVER

Julia O'Neill of Germantown, Md., places a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery. Every year, thousands travel from as far away as Maine for the ceremony.

**See Page 22.** AP/Ron Edmonds

## COP KEATING RELIEF

The American Legion's Burn Pit blog, Target Corp., and Computer Science Corp. together raised more than \$100,000 in donated cash and merchandise, and 56 laptop computers, for U.S. soldiers who were forced to destroy their position – and their belongings – in an Oct. 3 attack in Afghanistan. One of the Fort Carson, Colo.-based troops from Combat Outpost Keating wrote in an e-mail to The American Legion that he believed no one at home knew what they were doing there and that no one cared. Within a month of the assault – after Target store shopping sprees in Colorado Springs, Minneapolis and Dumfries, Va. – the troops had replacement comfort items, including video games, DVDs, books, magazines, memory sticks and more. Above, Legionnaires working out of Post 435 in Richfield, Minn., enter a Minneapolis Target to make purchases with the COP Keating Relief Fund. Target employees and managers volunteered and supported the effort in each of the cities. Thomas Whisenand

[www.burnpit.legion.org](http://www.burnpit.legion.org)

[www.legion.org/troops](http://www.legion.org/troops)

*The American Legion Magazine*, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.5 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 15,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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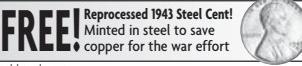
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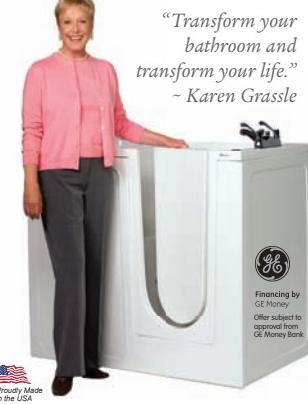
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#### MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN LEGION

Veterans who served at least one day of active military duty during wartime, or are serving now, are potentially eligible for membership in The American Legion. Members must have been honorably discharged or still serving honorably.

<b>ELIGIBILITY</b>	Aug 2, 1990 – current
<b>DATES OF MILITARY SERVICE</b>	Dec. 20, 1989 – Jan. 31, 1990
<b>MILITARY SERVICE</b>	Aug. 24, 1982 – July 31, 1984
	Feb. 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975
	June 25, 1950 – Jan. 31, 1955
	Dec. 7, 1941 – Dec. 31, 1946
	April 6, 1917 – Nov 11, 1918
	(Merchant Marines who served from Dec. 7, 1941 to Dec. 31, 1946, are also eligible.)

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## 'Shrouded in Sickness'

I'd like to once again compliment The American Legion on its steadfast devotion to discovering the truth regarding the health of Gulf War veterans (October). Although I have not suffered any illnesses, I have been as active as possible in the process to discover what has been occurring in my fellow soldiers. I have 20 years of articles, reports and correspondence to and from a wide array of individuals and organizations.

Early on, there was a great deal of hysteria regarding Gulf War veterans' health issues, with the wildest claims and stories given the highest degree of attention. People with no experience were credited as experts. Unscrupulous persons used the situation to their personal gain. I was invited to a seminar at which veterans were told what kinds of symptoms were best to invent, to avoid detection during testing and therefore get monetary payments. I was even offered money and/or threats to give support to "go along" with these claims. Other major veterans organizations gave support to many of them, even after they were shown to be false. I contacted them, but to no avail. They would not listen to any criticism of their clients.

But through it all, The American Legion continued to work toward finding the causes of the troubles and helping veterans get the legitimate medical care they need. No hype, no hysteria, just brotherly compassion. I can say the Legion is truly what a veterans organization should be, and I'm proud to be a member.

— Andrew Frennier, Mount Juliet, Tenn.

Your article on Gulf War syndrome basically regurgitated the same stuff the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – and VA – have been using for years. I have all the symptoms. No civilian doctors will attempt to treat it. They just shake their heads and say I'm a hard case. I contacted VA and asked for a list of doctors so I could get a physical. That was a month and a half ago. So I went online and found a doctor who has done independent research. Unfortunately, most people think the CDC and VA are the only experts on the subject. But their minds are made up. Don't confuse them with any other possible causes and cures.

— John Lemon, Midway, Utah

I was in the Marines during the Gulf War. We were given the bromide pills, or NAPS, as we called them. After taking them, I salivated for hours, and my gunner couldn't speak

properly, either. He was sent to the battalion aid station. I was told not to worry about it, as it was probably all in his head. As for my salivating, I was told it was probably due to a blocked salivary gland. That doesn't add up. I'm glad to see the Legion is helping keep us informed of the after-effects of these pills, as well as other chemicals that may adversely affect us.

— Thomas Charnley, Monkton, Vt.

## 'The Trouble With Trilateralism'

The chief danger to our liberties from the Security and Prosperity Partnership Agreement lies in the fact that it was styled as an agreement, not a treaty (October). That was deliberately done to prevent Congress from questioning it during ratification. As it's implemented now, the people have no voice in the decisions made.

Issues as wide-ranging as crisis intervention, immigration



policy, agriculture, government regulation, security and a host of other things are discussed and acted upon with the force of law by unelected, unaccountable corporate functionaries and government bureaucrats the agreement calls "stakeholders."

The author may think that's a grand idea, and it is for the corporations that stand to benefit the most and control the whole process, but it's certainly not for us. The people reign supreme in this country, not corporations. Congress should immediately investigate this agreement.

— Gary Capshaw, Denison, Texas

### **F-22 purchases**

I agree with Rep. Mike Quigley that further purchases of the F-22 are detrimental to the overall readiness of the military (Big Issues, October). These monies would be better suited to recapitalizing existing combat systems and properly outfitting all servicemembers deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan. The current purchase of the F-22, along with the existing F-15 and F-16 fleets, is more than capable of deterring or defeating any foreign threats. The \$2 billion saved could go a long way in ensuring that servicemembers on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan don't have to worry about equipment failure while on a mission.

— John R. Parker, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

The F-22 is the most capable fighter aircraft ever fielded, yet our own defense secretary deems it superfluous. How does that work? Because we're in two wars, and it's never flown a

mission in either theater? Will our nuclear-missile subs be next on the chopping block? That the Patriot has seen its last hurrah?

Rep. Mike Quigley makes it a choice of either more F-22s or more body armor and tanks. How about we reopen the Raptor line and pay for it by defunding ACORN, that ongoing criminal enterprise in Quigley's home state? The Raptor is a shovel-ready project if there ever was one, so other than the fact that it just might be necessary for national defense, what other gripe does the administration have? It's expensive? Well, how about we use some of those Medicare waste and fraud cost savings it apparently knows about until it manages to get the health-care house in order?

— Norris Bettis, Hixson, Tenn.

### **'Forgotten Fronts'**

Alan Dowd's article (October) is slightly misleading regarding Libya's Moammar Gadhafi, whose "renunciation" of terror as a tool of his dictatorship is a joke. He has simply been shrewd in playing "nice" before the international community just so he can remain in power, as he has for 40 years — longer than any other dictator, living or dead, except Fidel Castro. Didn't Gadhafi just welcome back to Libya, with open arms, the terrorist who was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, after a bleeding-heart judge in Scotland released him on grounds of sympathy for terminal prostate cancer?

— Paul Montenegro, Chula Vista, Calif.

### **'Out of the Darkness'**

I'm also a male survivor of military sexual trauma. The dirty little secret no one wants to talk about is the way in which survivors such as myself are pushed out of the military by way of "personality disorder." I've had two batteries of psychological testing that confirmed no such disorder, yet the military continues to insist I have it even in front of the Board for Correction of Naval Records and in court filings. Of course, the other ways out for male survivors are just as bad: homosexuality, alcohol treatment failure and misconduct, just to name a few. All describe the apparent symptoms of sexual trauma or stigmatize the victim by implying he wanted the trauma.

Efforts to change the discharge to accurately reflect what happened are frustrating at best. The Board for Correction of Naval Records has a correction rate of about 10 percent. And to get an attorney to represent me could cost above \$30,000.

In actuality, few VA hospitals have anyone on staff who specializes in treating military sexual trauma victims, particularly men. Survivors are generally placed with a general psychologist or social worker who is out of his depth with survivor recovery. Groups, even at major VA hospitals, are virtually nonexistent. I live in Baltimore and the closest group for male military sexual trauma victims is 50 miles away.

I admit to needing help. Have I gotten it? No.

— Brian Lewis, Baltimore

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# Operation Comfort Warriors keeps pledge

One of my favorite clauses in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion comes at the end: "To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness."

These are more than words. They are a pledge to help our comrades. Operation Comfort Warriors is the epitome of that pledge. The men and women defending America in uniform are, indeed, our comrades. They help us by preserving our way of life; we help them by providing comfort items to those who are wounded or sick.

Thanks to the generosity of our American Legion family members and friends, we have purchased sweat suits, phone cards, DVDs, CDs, iPods, puzzles, books, video games, and other items for men and women who are recovering at military hospitals and warrior transition units. These items won't make all of these heroes "whole" again, but it does show them that we care and we appreciate their sacrifice.

More than 35,000 men and women in U.S. military uniforms have been injured since the global war on terrorism started. Factor in the thousands who are hospitalized each year because of accidents or illnesses, and you can see that the need to help is quite significant. From December 2008 until the close of the 91st National Convention in Louisville, Ky., last August, The American Legion family raised about \$189,000 for Operation Comfort Warriors. One of my first acts as national commander was to set a new goal: to raise an additional \$100,000 by the end of this year.

The goal is achievable. Donald Williams, a World War II veteran and Legionnaire from Clinton, Minn., sent a note along with a check imploring us to "keep Operation Comfort Warriors going." Bruce D. Edwards of San Diego added, "I am a former Marine from Vietnam and glad to be able to contribute to this ongoing campaign."

Not a penny of donated money is spent on administrative costs or marketing. Those expenses are paid from our headquarters budget.

The American Legion has found a special partner to help distribute some of these items. Klay South was shot in the face and leg by an Iraqi insurgent during the 2004 battle of Fallujah. This Marine also bore the brunt of a grenade blast and endured more than 40 follow-up surgeries and procedures. Now with a titanium jaw and 22 false teeth, South has dedicated himself to supporting his fellow wounded warriors with a group of his own called Veterans of Valor.

Impressed by this dedicated veteran, delegates at our 91st American Legion National Convention passed Resolution 108, which supports Veterans of Valor and its programs to assist severely wounded veterans. A Legionnaire from Post 252 in Greenwood, Ind., South is not paid for his efforts – he is one more Legionnaire who helps make Operation Comfort Warriors the success it is.

Some people may think that expecting \$100,000 during an economic recession is too lofty a goal. I don't. Legion family members are generous, and the holiday season is fast-approaching. What better way is there to show your holiday spirit than to remember those who have served and are still serving?



Chase Studios

National Commander  
Clarence E. Hill

## MEMORANDA

### DONATE TO OPERATION COMFORT WARRIOR

Through Operation Comfort Warriors, the Legion family is providing loose-fitting sweat suits, phone cards, iPods and other comfort items for servicemembers recovering at military hospitals. Use your credit card to donate online at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org), or send a check to **Operation Comfort Warriors, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

### FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

Military families in need of help can turn to The American Legion's Family Support Network. In countless ways, Legionnaires can provide support and services to families affected by the obligations of military service. Families needing help are encouraged to call the toll-free number to get connected with a nearby American Legion post:

**(800) 504-4098**

Forms to seek assistance are available online:  
[www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

### KEEP UP WITH THE COMMANDER

American Legion National Commander Clarence E. Hill records his travels, discusses issues, and posts videos and photos online:  
[www.clarencehill.legion.org](http://www.clarencehill.legion.org)

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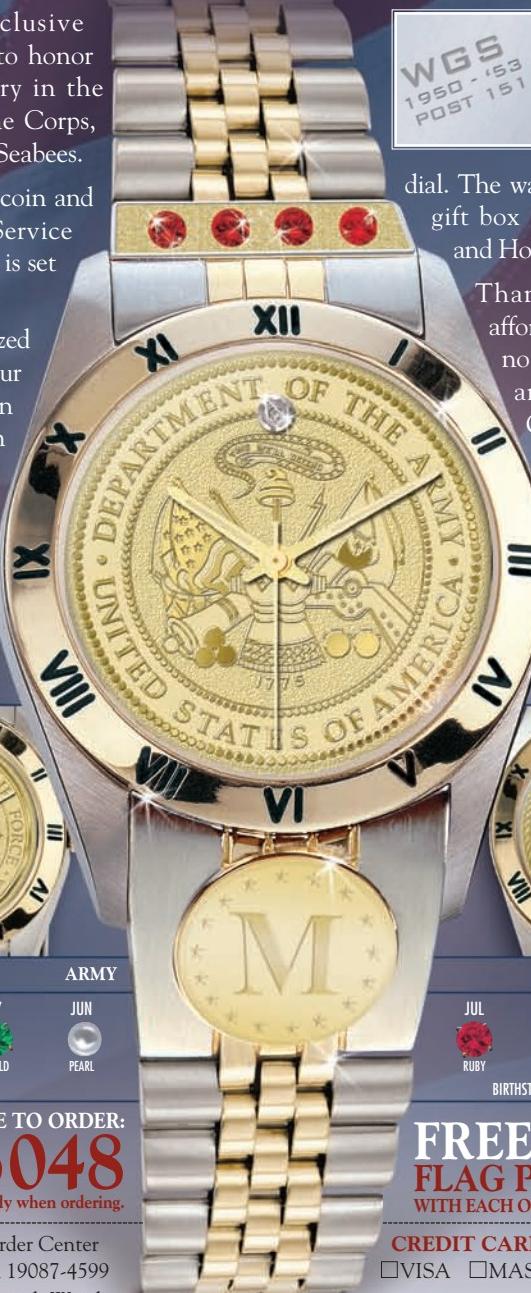
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# Public option in health care



## SUPPORT

### **Rep. Alan Grayson, D-Fla.**

■ Grayson is a member of the House Committee on Financial Services.



## OPPOSE

### **Rep. Charles Boustany, R-La.**

■ Boustany is the ranking member of the House Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee.

The public option is just that: an option. If you currently have health insurance and like it, you can keep it. However, if you do not have any coverage (47 million people in America do not), or you are unhappy with your health-care provider, you will have another choice.

The idea is to simply expand the Medicare network to everyone and then charge them a fair premium for their coverage. In turn, this will provide competition with the existing providers who currently hold monopolies or oligopolies in most states. In many parts of the country, 80 percent of the health-care market is controlled by one or two insurance companies.

Currently, one-third of the nation is under federal or state care. The public option allows the other two-thirds of Americans to benefit from this investment. If you already have Medicare, the only changes are your co-payments for routine care, which will be eliminated, and the infamous "donut hole," which will disappear.

The public option will not cover illegal aliens, ration health care or create "death panels." These are paranoid delusions promoted by fearmongers.

Most providers offer all the health care you need, as long as you don't need it. With this legislation, you cannot be denied insurance because of a pre-existing condition. Insurance companies will not be allowed to cut you off if you reach some arbitrary limit on medical expenses. Also, providers will be required to spend 85 percent of insurance premiums on your care. Medicare spends 97 percent. The average for private insurance companies right now is 70 percent. The rest goes toward overhead, paperwork and profit. That's one reason insurance company profits have increased 800 percent in the past eight years. We can no longer afford the status quo.

## THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

*Advocates say a public option in health care would lower prices and expand coverage. Critics say it would reduce choices and raise taxes.*

As a heart surgeon, I learned that the doctor-patient relationship is based on trust. Unfortunately, congressional Democrats propose legislation that would weaken this relationship and harm the quality of health care. The so-called

"public option" would force millions of Americans to lose their existing coverage. Veterans could face a new 2.5-percent tax on individual income if their plan fails to meet new standards.

Without more physicians, appointments for military retirees in TRICARE for Life could see delays as millions of patients in a new, government-run plan struggle to find doctors. Provider payment cuts under the new public option will only worsen shortages. Existing entitlement programs such as Medicare and Social Security already risk bankruptcy, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. Creating a new unfunded entitlement program could shortchange other critical health programs, and harm veterans and military retirees.

It's time to focus on common-sense solutions and put aside controversial ideas like a new government-run plan. We can allow small businesses to pool together to receive discounts from insurers that large employers and labor unions currently enjoy. We can create better options for patients with pre-existing conditions, address the problem of defensive medicine, and promote healthier lifestyle choices through wellness programs. A summary of Republican solutions can be found online at [healthcare.gop.gov](http://healthcare.gop.gov).

Republicans stand ready to work with the president and Congress to provide real solutions to Americans' health-care problems. However, the government-run bureaucracy in H.R. 3200 fails to accomplish this goal.

## CONTACT YOUR LEADERS

The Honorable (name), U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510 • Phone: (202) 224-3121

The Honorable (name), U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515 • Phone: (202) 225-3121

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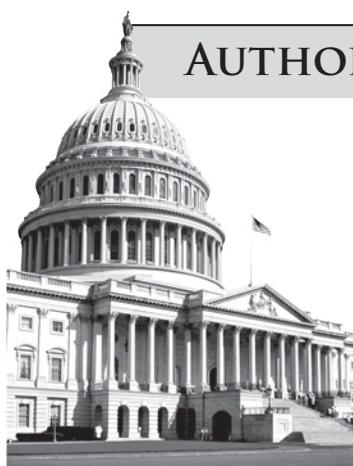
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# Dialysis on the go

BY DR. JOEL KUPERSMITH

The number of Americans with end-stage kidney disease who require dialysis has risen sharply in recent years, and is expected to reach 2 million by 2030. Part of the reason for the increase is the rising prevalence of diabetes – the leading cause of kidney failure.

A new invention by two VA kidney specialists – the Automated Wearable Artificial Kidney, or AWAK – may help many veterans and others who need dialysis to stay alive, allowing them to undergo continuous treatment without being hooked up to a stationary dialysis machine. This will mean new independence for those with advanced kidney disease.

The device removes toxins and excess fluid from the blood for those whose kidneys can no longer do the job. While portable artificial kidneys have been developed in the past, this would be the first wearable one based on peritoneal dialysis – a type of dialysis that requires no transfer of blood outside the body.

In peritoneal dialysis, the peritoneum – a membrane that lines the abdomen – filters the blood. This contrasts with hemodialysis, in which blood is

removed from the body, purified by machine, then returned to the body.

In the AWAK version of peritoneal dialysis, a special salt solution is infused into the abdomen, where it picks up wastes from the blood vessels. The solution is then drained from the abdomen and purified by a mixture of “sorbents” – chemicals that sponge up wastes. The clean solution is then returned to the abdomen to pick up more waste, and this automated cycle continues indefinitely. All the patient has

to do is replace the sorbent cartridge every few hours, occasionally get rid of excess fluid, and change the battery that runs the pump.

The inventors of the AWAK, Martin Roberts and David B.N. Lee of VA and the University of California, say it will soon be ready for clinical trials and could be commercially available within the next two to three years.

*Dr. Joel Kupersmith is chief research and development officer for the Veterans Health Administration.*



Corbis

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

## NEW CLUES MAY AID PTSD PREVENTION

Of all Iraq war veterans, 12 to 20 percent experience post-traumatic stress disorder, and some military recruits are even more vulnerable. In a large study of U.S. military personnel that began in 2001, researchers found that recruits with diminished mental or physical health before combat deployment were two to three times more likely to develop PTSD symptoms after deployment. Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study may help the military design programs to prevent this debilitating disorder.



Photo Disc

# Shake that salt habit

Americans are in the grip of an addiction to the white stuff, and it can be harmful to our health. Once people start using it, they're often hooked for life. It's time to look at our salt habit.

According to the American Heart Association, we shouldn't consume more than 2,300 milligrams of salt a day (about 1 teaspoon), yet the typical American consumes 3,500 to 4,000 milligrams daily, with some consuming four times the recommended daily allowance. Surprisingly, little of this comes from the salt shaker; rather, it's hidden in our foods – bread and processed foods being two of the biggest culprits – making salt difficult to avoid.

Consuming too much salt can lead to significant health problems, such as hypertension, asthma, diabetes and kidney disease. This means reducing salt intake is important for most of us. But as Deborah Kotz of *US News & World Report* found recently, salt is found in what many people view as healthy food:

**A cup of miso soup** contains 700 to 900 milligrams of sodium.

**Alternatives:** "Look for canned soups with 'low sodium' or 'reduced sodium' on the label."

Even **low-fat cottage cheese** can include more than 900 mg of sodium in just a cup.

**Alternatives:** Plain yogurt or Swiss cheese

**Salsa** may contain 115 milligrams of sodium per tablespoon.

**Alternatives:** "Look for brands made with 'salt-free' tomatoes."

**A dill pickle** "typically contains 830 milligrams of sodium."

**Alternatives:** Sweet gherkin pickles or sliced cucumber

**A croissant** can have more than 400 milligrams of sodium.

**Alternatives:** Reduced-sodium whole-grain bread or white bread

**Just 3 ounces of Alaskan king crab** contain more than 900 milligrams of sodium.

**Alternatives:** Baked salmon, swordfish or flounder

**Raisin Bran** has 362 milligrams of sodium in a one-cup serving.

**Alternatives:** All-Bran or Frosted Mini-Wheats

**A McDonald's Egg McMuffin** has 820 milligrams of sodium.

**Alternatives:** Plain toasted English muffin or two scrambled eggs

**Salad dressings** can be loaded with sodium; "some brands pack in upwards of 700 milligrams of sodium per 1.5 ounce serving."

**Alternatives:** "Drizzle on your own oil and vinegar or read labels carefully and aim for fewer than 150 milligrams per serving."

**Canned tuna** can contain 300 milligrams of sodium per 3-ounce serving.

**Alternatives:** Grilled tuna steak



Lew Robertson

## HOOAH 4 HEALTH

Citizen-soldiers, take note: the U.S. Army hosts a comprehensive Web site offering health information and support for reservists. The site contains tools and resources on everything from physical and mental health to deployment and family wellness issues.

[www.hooah4health.com](http://www.hooah4health.com)

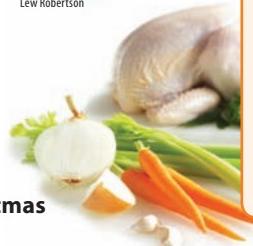
## CHRISTMAS TREATS

Eating Well offers a smorgasbord of Christmas treat suggestions to keep your family both merry and healthy, including appetizers, sides and salads, beef and chicken dishes and desserts.

[www.eatingwell.com/recipes\\_menus/collections/christmas](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus/collections/christmas)



Lew Robertson



## SMOKELESS DANGERS

New research finds that just a pinch of smokeless tobacco delivers "the same amount of PAH (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) as smoking five cigarettes," according to HealthDay.

PAHs are considered "environmental contaminants," and some are carcinogens. In addition to these PAHs, smokeless tobacco contains at least 24 other carcinogens that can lead to oral and pancreatic cancer.

# Amish mantle and miracle invention help home heat bills hit rock bottom

*Miracle heaters being given away free with orders for real Amish fireplace mantles to announce the invention that helps slash heat bills, but Amish craftsmen under strain of Christmas rush force household limit of 2*

**Save money: only uses about 9¢ electric an hour; so turn down your thermostat and never be cold again**

By MARK WOODS  
Universal Media Syndicate

(UMS) Everyone hates high heat bills. But we're all sick and tired of simply turning down the thermostat and then being cold.

Well now, the popular HEAT SURGE® miracle heaters are actually being given away free to the general public for the next 7 days starting at precisely 8:00 a.m. today.

The only thing readers have to do is call the National Distribution Hotline before the 7-day deadline with their order for the handmade Amish Fireplace Mantle. Everyone who does is instantly being awarded the miracle heater absolutely free.

This is all happening to announce the HEAT SURGE Roll-n-Glow® Fireplace which actually rolls from room-to-room so you can turn down your thermostat and take the heat with you anywhere. That way, everyone who gets them first can immediately start saving on their heat bills.

Just in time for winter weather, portable Amish encased fireplaces are being delivered directly to the doors of all those who beat the deadline.

These remarkable fireplaces are being called a miracle because they have what's being called the Fireless Flame™ patented technology that gives you the peaceful flicker of a real fire but without any flames, fumes, smells, ashes or mess. Everyone is getting them because they require no chimney and no vent. You



**■ GENUINE AMISH MANTLES MADE IN THE USA:** Everyone wants to save money on heat bills this winter, so entire Amish communities are working from the crack of dawn to finish. These fine real wood Amish made fireplace mantles are built to last forever. The oak mantle is a real steal at just two hundred ninety-eight dollars because all those who beat the order deadline by calling the National Hotline at 1-866-874-7770 to order the fireplace mantles are actually getting the imported hi-tech Fireless Flame HEAT SURGE miracle heaters for free.

just plug them in.

The Fireless Flame looks so real it amazes everybody because it has no real fire. So what's the catch? Well, soft spoken Amish craftsmen who take their time hand



**■ JUST ANNOUNCED:** The Heat Surge miracle fireplace has earned the prestigious Good Housekeeping Seal. The product has earned the Seal after evaluation by the Good Housekeeping Research Institute.

building the mantles have a process that forces a strict household limit of 2 to keep up with orders.

"We can barely keep up ever since we started giving heaters away free. With winter just around the corner, everyone's trying to get them. Amish craftsmen are working their fingers to the bone to be sure everyone gets their delivery in time for Christmas," confirms Frederick Miller, National Shipping Director.

"These portable Roll-n-Glow Fireplaces are the latest home decorating sensation. They actually give you a beautifully redecorated room while they quickly heat from wall to wall. It's the best way to dress up every room, stay really warm and slash your

heat bills all at the same time," says Josette Holland, Home Makeover Expert.

And here's the best part. Readers who beat the 7-day order deadline are getting their imported hi-tech miracle heaters free when encased in the Amish built real wood fireplace mantles. The mantles are being handmade in the USA right in the heart of Amish country where they are beautifully hand-rubbed, stained and varnished.

You just can't find custom made Amish mantles like this in the national chain stores. That makes the oak mantle a real steal for just two hundred ninety-eight dollars since the entire cost of the miracle heater is free.

This free giveaway is the best way to slash heating



**How It Works:** The HEAT SURGE miracle heater is a work of engineering genius from the China coast so advanced, you simply plug it into any standard outlet. It uses only about 9¢ of electric an hour on the standard setting. Yet, it produces up to an amazing 5,119 BTU's on the high setting. So watch out, a powerful on board hi-tech heat turbine silently forces hot air out into the room from the vent so you feel the bone soothing heat instantly. It even has certification of Underwriters Laboratories coveted UL listing. It also comes with a limited full year replacement or money back warranty less shipping plus a 30-Day Satisfaction Guarantee. OH and FL resident transactions require the remittance of applicable sales tax. Sorry no shipments to MA residents.



LISTED: E322174



bills and stay warm this fall and winter. The HEAT SURGE Roll-n-Glow Fireplace gives you zone heating and all the beauty and warmth of a built-in fireplace but rolls from room-to-room so it can also save you a ton of money on heating bills.

Even people in California and Florida are flocking to get them so they may never have to turn on their furnace all winter. And since it uses

only about 9 cents of electric an hour on the standard setting, the potential savings are absolutely incredible.

"We are making sure no one gets left out, but you better hurry because entire communities of Amish craftsmen are straining to keep up with demands. For now, we are staying out of the large national retail stores in order to let readers have two per household just as long as they call before the deadline," con-

firms Miller.

It's a really smart decision to get two right now because for only the next 7 days you get both miracle heaters free. That's like putting five hundred bucks right in your pocket and you can save even more money on your monthly heating bills.

"Everyone's calling to get one but those who are getting their Christmas shopping done are surprising the whole family by getting



**ON THEIR WAY:** Christmas orders have turned country roads into pipelines to the big city delivery system. Everybody wants a fireplace that comes fully assembled with a handmade Amish mantle in oak or cherry finish and gets delivered by truck right to your door. All you do is plug it in.



Claim Code: FP10065

EVERYONE LIVING IN THE

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EVERYONE LIVING IN THE

**Frost Zone: 3**

START CALLING AT  
9:00 A.M. TODAY  
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*Rolls anywhere to throw an instant heat wave with no chimney, no vents, no wood and no smoke*



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**SAVES ON BILLS:** Everyone can get low bills and stay warm and cozy. The Roll-n-Glow Fireplace saves a ton of money and makes your front room look like a million bucks.



**SAFE FLAME:** The Fireless Flame looks so real it fools everyone but there is no real fire. That makes the flame window safe to the touch under the watchful eye of a parent. It's where the kids will play and the cat and dog will sleep.



**FREE:** Get this \$249 miracle heater free. It is being given away free to all who beat the 7-day order deadline for your choice of the oak or cherry finish Amish Mantles. The free heater comes already encased.

# Grocery prices continue to drop

Food prices have taken shoppers on a bumpy ride in the past couple of years, but there's some good news. The U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics reports that prices for many foods declined in 2009. Chicken, chips and cookies are taking a bigger bite out of grocery budgets, but eggs and apples are a bargain compared to last year. While the price of bread and milk has gone down, margarine has become more expensive.

## GROCERY BILL UPS AND DOWNS

Food	2008	2009	Change
<b>Going up...</b>			
Spaghetti and macaroni, per lb.	\$1.12	\$1.18	▲ 5.5%
Ground beef, lean and extra lean, per lb.	\$3.20	\$3.47	▲ 8.5%
Chicken, whole, per lb.	\$1.18	\$1.28	▲ 8.6%
Bologna, per lb.	\$2.52	\$3.20	▲ 27.2%
Margarine (soft tub), per lb.	\$1.37	\$1.56	▲ 14.3%
White sugar, per lb.	\$0.53	\$0.56	▲ 7.0%
Potato chips, 16 oz.	\$4.06	\$4.56	▲ 12.2%
Chocolate chip cookies, per lb.	\$2.88	\$3.25	▲ 13.0%
Ice cream, half-gallon	\$4.07	\$4.25	▲ 4.5%
Red and white wine, 1 liter	\$10.93	\$11.79	▲ 7.9%
<b>Going down...</b>			
Whole wheat bread, per lb.	\$1.98	\$1.85	▼ 6.8%
Pork chops, per lb.	\$3.37	\$3.16	▼ 6.3%
Eggs, 1 dozen	\$1.92	\$1.53	▼ 20.4%
Whole milk, 1 gallon	\$3.77	\$3.01	▼ 20.2%
Red Delicious apples, per lb.	\$1.36	\$1.18	▼ 13.1%
Oranges, per lb.	\$1.14	\$1.06	▼ 6.7%
Tomatoes, per lb.	\$1.81	\$1.60	▼ 11.6%



Media Bakery

## TRAVEL HEALTH



"One in five people will come down with a cold within a week of flying – that's approximately four times the risk they would have if they had stayed home," says Dr. Andrew Weil, clinical professor of medicine at the University of Arizona and director of its Center for Integrative Medicine.

Writing in *Prevention* magazine, Weil urges travelers to wash their hands often and use hand sanitizer, avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth, and keep their mucous membranes moist by drinking plenty of water. They should also avoid alcohol and caffeine, and use nasal sprays to hydrate the throat and nose.

Image Gold

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# Stress relief in criminal courts

BY TOM PHILPOTT

A rising number of state and local criminal courts are recognizing that combat veterans who commit crimes may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or mild traumatic brain injury. If such is the case, they may need – and deserve – health care more than jail time.

The trend is seen in jurisdictions that have established special veterans courts, and in states that have passed legislation to raise awareness among judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys that combat-related stress may be causing some veterans' misbehavior. When PTSD is confirmed, judges today are handing down more constructive sentences to troubled veterans than stints in prison.

These initiatives, combined with news accounts of "invisible injuries" inflicted on thousands of troops overseas, have changed the way many veterans who break the law are handled.

"There's a bunch of Petri dishes in courts all across the country where people are experimenting with different approaches," said Brockton D. Hunter, a criminal defense attorney in Minneapolis. "The commonality is recognizing that when veterans' criminal behavior is driven by a psychological injury, whether PTSD or TBI, we owe them the help they need as the country that sent them to war, because these veterans are every bit as injured as the guy who lost both legs to an IED blast."

The first local veterans court appeared in Buffalo, N.Y. Others now operate in Orange County and San Diego, Calif.; Tulsa, Okla., and parts of Alaska, Illinois and Pennsylvania. Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, led a roundtable discussion on these courts in mid-September to tout their benefits.

For veterans facing conviction, these courts assign other veterans to serve as mentors, arrange appointments with VA services, or appoint public defenders who encourage vets to tell their stories in court. Some of these courts also work to address

underlying problems for vet offenders, including unemployment and homelessness. Filner said veterans courts cost significantly less than incarceration. Long term, they save money and, "more importantly, they save lives," he said.

Less costly still is legislation like Minnesota passed last year. Hunter and another attorney, Guy Gambill, drafted and pushed the bill through, inspired by California's passage of a similar measure in 2007. It modified Minnesota's sentencing statute to encourage courts to deal more appropriately with psychologically injured veterans. Probation officers conducting pre-sentencing investigations now must consult with VA and inform judges on what role PTSD or TBI may have played in offenses committed by servicemembers or veterans.

Given the sacrifices our veterans have made, legal advocates such as Hunter are urging judges and prosecutors "to take a look at this issue with fresh eyes." Where they find "underlying psychological injury," courts should consider "a therapeutic response" rather than convictions and sentences that will follow veterans throughout their lives.

The message is being received. "With lower level offenses, more judges are deciding it doesn't make sense to convict these people if they have an opportunity to get the help they need," Hunter said. Offenders often enter no-contest pleas and agree to get treatment, thus avoiding convictions.

But PTSD or TBI can't be "get-out-of-jail-free" cards, which remains a worry for prosecutors, Hunter said. Before treatment can replace jail time, veterans need to take responsibility for what they've done, admit they've got a problem and get the help they need.

*Tom Philpott, a former Coast Guardsman, has written about veterans and military personnel issues for more than 30 years.*

***More courts are taking PTSD and TBI into consideration when deciding the cases of veterans who have broken the law.***



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# Holiday Honors

*A Maine businessman describes how one year of extra inventory led to a nationwide act of remembrance at Christmastime.*

BY DENNIS McCAFFERTY

Starting the first week of November, workers at the Worcester Wreath Co. in Harrington, Maine, assemble thousands of Christmas wreaths made from lush, green balsam fir trees. Each wreath measures 20 inches across. Then, nearly 100 volunteers arrive on a Sunday morning in December to decorate them with crimson bows and matching ornaments. That afternoon, they pack the wreaths into a couple of tractor-trailers and – escorted by as many as 100 other vehicles driven by volunteers – the convoy treks 770 miles south along U.S. Route 1, all the way to Arlington National Cemetery, where American Legion members and thousands of other volunteers carefully place the wreaths at grave sites of those who served their country. At about 350 other cemeteries around the country, similar ceremonies take place at the same time.

Coordinating it all, in his leather farm jacket and baseball cap, is Morrill Worcester, who started the effort in 1992 – back when he had no volunteers and still managed to get 5,000 wreaths to Arlington. This year, he expects to place more than 100,000 wreaths (at least 15,000 at Arlington) and the remainder at other cemeteries nationwide – all made possible by his nonprofit foundation, Wreaths Across America.

Ever since he first visited Arlington at age 12, Worcester has been spellbound by the cemetery's quiet power. "I was so overtaken by the enormity of it all," recalls Worcester, who turns 60 on Christmas Eve. "It seemed to go on forever. Yet everything was nice and clean and quiet, and every gravestone seemed to be lined up so perfectly."

After that trip, Worcester went on to become a successful entrepreneur. He sold sweet corn, carrots and other produce at roadside stands. He built a concrete-manufacturing enterprise. He bought a professional basketball team, the

**ABOVE:** Sailors place wreaths on headstones at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. Every year, volunteers travel from as far away as Maine to participate in the annual wreath-laying. AP/Ron Edmonds

Maine Lumberjacks, from the old Continental Basketball Association. And he started his Worcester Wreath Co., a top supplier to L.L. Bean's holiday product line for over a quarter-century. That for-profit company was what launched Wreaths Across America.

Comments from visitors to the foundation's Web site capture the immense geographic and emotional sweep of the project. From Evesham, England, a gentleman named Douglas Harrison inquires about getting a wreath for a friend from long ago whom he believes is now buried at Arlington. In Rittman, Ohio, students collect loose change to raise \$3,036 for wreaths. And this from a woman only identified as Donna, who lives in Pennsylvania: "My sisters and I were on our annual visit to Beverly to remember my mom's brother, William Hesselbacher Jr., who died in World War II at age

of 22, and when we arrived, the Wreaths Across America Ceremony was about to begin. We were very fortunate to attend .... We have often wondered who the men were who lay next to our uncle, and if they are still remembered after all these years. Let's not forget them."

Thanks to Worcester and his volunteers, these veterans aren't forgotten. The project founder recently spoke with *The American Legion Magazine*.

**Q:** *How did all of this begin?*

**A:** It started by accident. At the end of the Christmas buying season in 1992, I realized I'd have 5,000 wreaths left over once I filled my suppliers' orders. I had a good year that year, but I was still way over in inventory. These were still very nice wreaths, very fresh and well assembled, and I didn't want to waste them. I thought it would be worthwhile to place them at the graves in Arlington. I had to get clearance, so I contacted the office

of Sen. Olympia Snowe, who was a congresswoman at the time. The next day, they told me I could take my wreaths to Arlington. I got a truck donated to me, and my son, a couple of my employees, and I drove to Washington. When we arrived, we had about a dozen volunteers show up, including several from The American Legion. I don't know how, but they found out about us, and they just were waiting at the cemetery. With their help, it took us six hours to get all of the wreaths placed.



Xiomara Ayala completes a wreath at the Worcester Wreath Co. in Harrington, Maine. The company produces 500,000 wreaths for the holiday season, of which volunteers place 15,000 at Arlington National Cemetery, free of charge. AP/Robert F. Bukaty

**Q:** *How did it grow from there?*

**A:** For the first 14 years, it didn't. I went the longest time just doing this my way. It was my own personal thing to do, I figured. After a while, we got up to 100 volunteers to help us place the wreaths at Arlington. But in 2005, a photographer took a very nice picture of one of the wreaths, and he put it on his Web site, along with a poem. That summer, we were getting calls and e-mails from people all over the world, sending us contributions and asking us how they could help. At the time, we didn't have the nonprofit, so we couldn't accept any of

their money. We literally had to send it back. But we soon established the foundation, and we expanded to cemeteries nationwide, because we realize that veterans are buried all over the country. By 2007, we expanded to about 35,000 wreaths overall. Last year, we did 105,724. My company doesn't donate every one, either. We donated 28,000 last year. The rest are provided through contributions from individuals and businesses and community groups.

**Q:** *You make quite an annual journey to deliver the wreaths. Describe the experience.*

**A:** It really can be something. We'll make 26 stops. There are so many towns that want to present something to us, or communities where people are just sitting by the road, waiting. We're always running late, too, because we have quite a lot of vehicles with all the trucks and the motorcycles. In Rye, N.Y., they gave me the key to the city



*Morrill Worchester is a friend of former Olympic and college baseball coach Dr. John Winkin. Every year, Winkin, who served under Adm. William F. Halsey in the Pacific during World War II, traveled to Arlington to lay a wreath at Halsey's grave until a stroke made the journey impossible. Since then, Worchester has personally laid a wreath at the headstone to honor the service of both his friend and Halsey.*

and staged their own wreath-laying ceremony. In Old Saybrook, Conn., they really rolled out the red carpet. They had a huge ceremony, fed us a chicken dinner and put us up in a local hotel for the night. The next day, they cooked us eggs and bacon. Sometimes, it's something simple that touches you. We once saw a guy on the side of the road with a lantern in the dark of night. He started waving this huge American flag that he had. Totally thrilled to see us.

**Q:** *What memories are most vivid from actually placing the wreaths at Arlington?*

**A:** I'll never forget one. It was two years ago and my wife, Karen, and I were placing wreaths at a section there. We went to the edge of a hill and saw a horse-drawn caisson with a casket. There was just one car behind it, so you know the person who died didn't have many people to attend the burial ceremony. But as soon as people heard those horses – and there were thousands of people at Arlington that day because of our wreaths – everybody stopped what they were doing. They took their hats off and placed their hands over their hearts. My wife had tears in her eyes.

**Q:** *How has The American Legion been involved?*  
**A:** The Legion has been there from the very

beginning, of course. We can't do it without the support of the Legion and all the other groups that help out. In March, the American Legion Auxiliary awarded me its Public Spirit Award. I was very humbled to receive it. When I said a few remarks, I recognized a woman from the Legion who was with us on that very first day that we brought the wreaths. I acknowledged her to the audience. I didn't even recall her name, but I remembered what she did for us that day.

**Q:** *What kind of feedback do you get from families of the deceased?*

**A:** We get all kinds of wonderful e-mails and letters

and cards. So many say that they went to the grave of their dad or granddad or brother and discovered the wreath. They tell us they had no idea it was there, and they're so appreciative that someone remembered their loved one.

#### **WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA**

Learn more about the wreaths project, including how to start a local drive:

[www.wreathsacrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org)

**Wreaths Across America**

P.O. Box 256

Harrington, ME 04643

**Q:** *Do young people participate too?*

**A:** That's one of the prime focuses of Wreaths Across America: to get young people involved. With all the volunteers we now have at Arlington, you're going to get to place two wreaths at most. So we tell

the kids and their families to take their time. Look at the gravestone for a while and try to get a sense of who this person was. We want the young people to really understand the sacrifices people made for this country.

**Q:** *What, ultimately, is your goal?*

**A:** This might sound crazy, but someday I want a wreath on every single veteran's grave. You're talking millions, of course. But that would be quite a message to send to the world. I hope it happens someday. Who knows? ☺

*Dennis McCafferty is a Washington-area writer. He is a senior writer for USA Weekend.*

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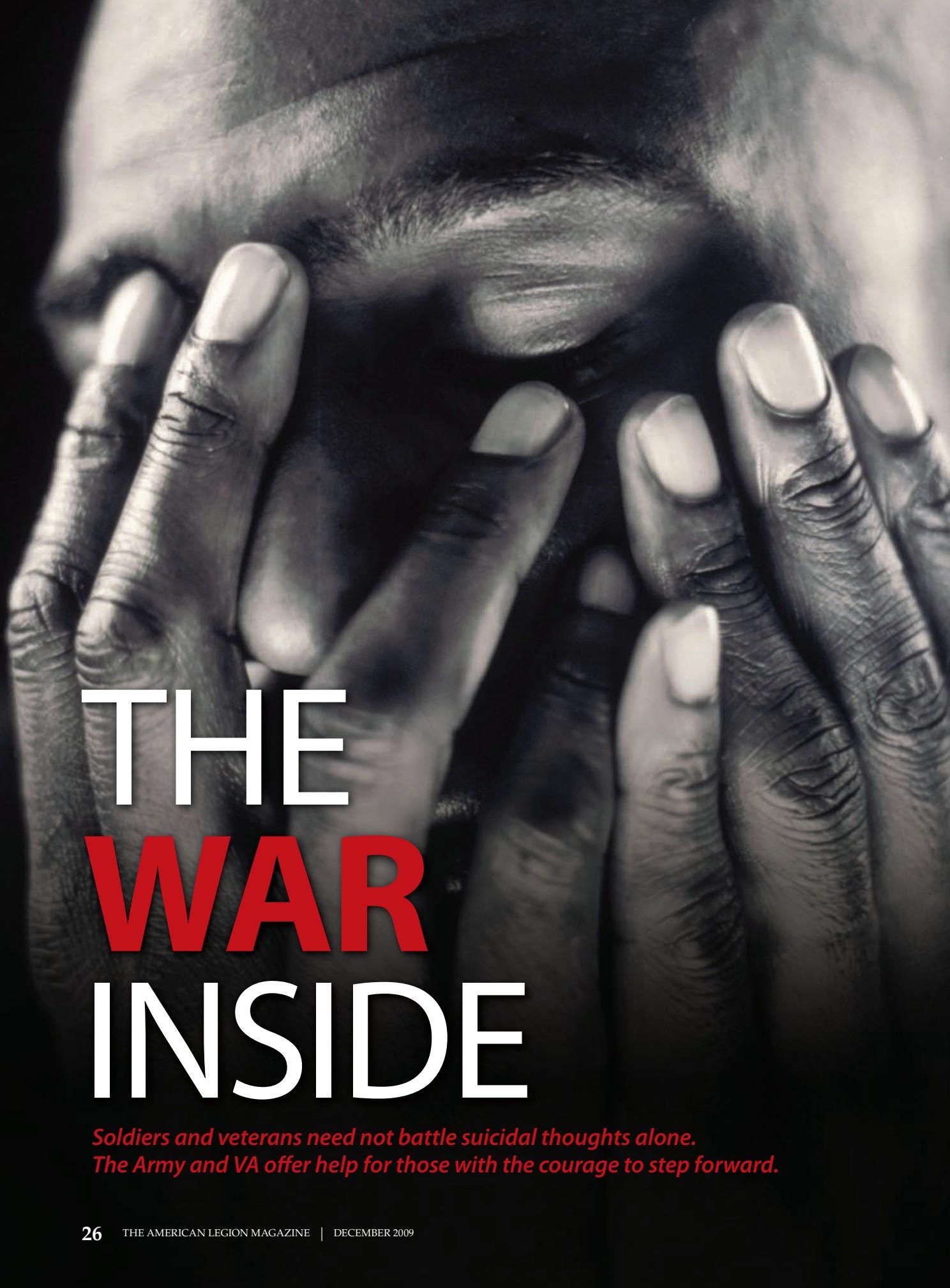
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# THE WAR INSIDE

*Soldiers and veterans need not battle suicidal thoughts alone.  
The Army and VA offer help for those with the courage to step forward.*

BY KEN OLSEN

Maj. Gen. Mark Graham understands the tragedy of suicide firsthand. His 21-year-old son killed himself in 2003 after struggling with depression. A top ROTC cadet at the University of Kentucky, Kevin Graham wanted to be an Army doctor. He quit taking his medication because he didn't want the Army to find out about his illness.

Eight months later, a roadside bomb in Iraq took the life of Graham's other son, Jeff.

"Both of my sons died fighting different battles," says Graham, deputy chief of staff for U.S. Army Forces Command at Fort McPherson, Ga. "They were both heroes to us, both great young men."

Years went by before Graham spoke publicly about what happened. Today, he is part of the Army's intense push to reduce a historic spike in soldier suicides. He is encouraging people to talk frankly about the stigmas associated with mental health care and suicide.

"People think if you talk about suicide, you'll cause somebody to do it," Graham says. "That is not the case. We've got to talk about it in order for people to know it's OK to come forward and get help. We have to educate people to know it's a sign of strength – not weakness – to get help."

These are messages the military urgently hopes the troops will heed. More than 600 soldiers and Marines killed themselves between 2003 and 2008 – the equivalent of a battalion task force. Another 177 active-duty and inactive-duty reserve soldiers reportedly had taken their own lives by the end of September – 61 were still under investigation at the time – putting the Army on track for a record number of suicides for the fifth consecutive year.

"We have got to do better," Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli said after the suicide data was released. "We are trying every remedy and seeking help from outside agencies that are experts in suicide prevention. There isn't a reasonable suicide-prevention tool out there the Army won't potentially employ."

Mobile behavioral health teams have become a part of each brigade at Fort Carson, one of the

## National Guard intervention team steps in to 'handle any crisis'

The call came to the Crisis Intervention Team on an early evening last spring. A soldier who returned from Iraq six months earlier was distraught over financial problems. After drinking heavily and perhaps taking prescription drugs, he climbed into his car, threatened to hurt himself, and drove away. His friend was concerned.

The Crisis Team contacted police in the soldier's community and joined officers in canvassing his known hangouts. When they found him, police took the troubled soldier to a VA hospital for treatment instead of jail because the crisis team was personally involved.

That's typical for the Indiana National Guard.

"When we're the ones who call the police, 90 percent of our soldiers are not taken to jail; they escort them to the hospital because we're there on the ground," says Lt. Col. Ross Waltemath, head of civil-military operations for the Indiana Guard.

Waltemath runs one of the few comprehensive National Guard crisis groups in the country. It includes specialists in behavioral health and suicide prevention and intervention, a sexual-assault victims advocate, a drug- and alcohol-counseling resource expert, and a chaplain. While the National Guard has established individual programs in these areas throughout the country, Indiana is one of two states to bring them together under one roof, thanks to the foresight of Maj. Gen. R. Martin Umbarger, the state's adjutant general.

"We can handle any crisis – from spiritual to alcohol to domestic – from one office," Waltemath says. There's ample demand. Waltemath's team gets called almost daily. A bad week brings eight to 10 calls, he says.

Indiana currently has two crisis-intervention teams, with plans to expand until every major National Guard command in the state has its own group. When they get a call that a soldier is in trouble – most often the call comes from a family member – they climb in a van along with a leader from the soldier's unit and drive to wherever there is a soldier in need.

"It's like pushing the red button in a hospital when somebody calls code," Waltemath says. "Everybody comes running."

– Ken Olsen

world's largest Army bases. That makes it routine business for a soldier to seek help. "You go see the S-1 for a personnel action, to the medical clinic to get your stuff done, or go by and see the behavioral-health guys," Graham says. "So it's OK. It's accepted by the soldiers and leaders."

The Army also has dramatically increased its suicide-prevention efforts. All 1.1 million soldiers were pulled from their normal duties over a six-week period last spring to learn ways to recognize suicidal behavior, and help fellow soldiers who are distressed or showing signs of suicide. This includes asking troubled soldiers if they are considering, or have considered, taking their own lives. "Normally, if they have, they will tell you," Graham says. "When they do, you don't just say, 'Hey, you need to go get help.' You take them to get help, right then."

Annual suicide-prevention training will be provided Army-wide, emphasizing the common causes of suicidal behavior and the critical role Army leaders, friends, co-workers and families play in helping soldiers. In addition, the Army created a suicide-prevention task force that made dozens of improvements to programs and recruited additional psychological- and behavioral-health counselors, says Army spokesman Wayne V. Hall.

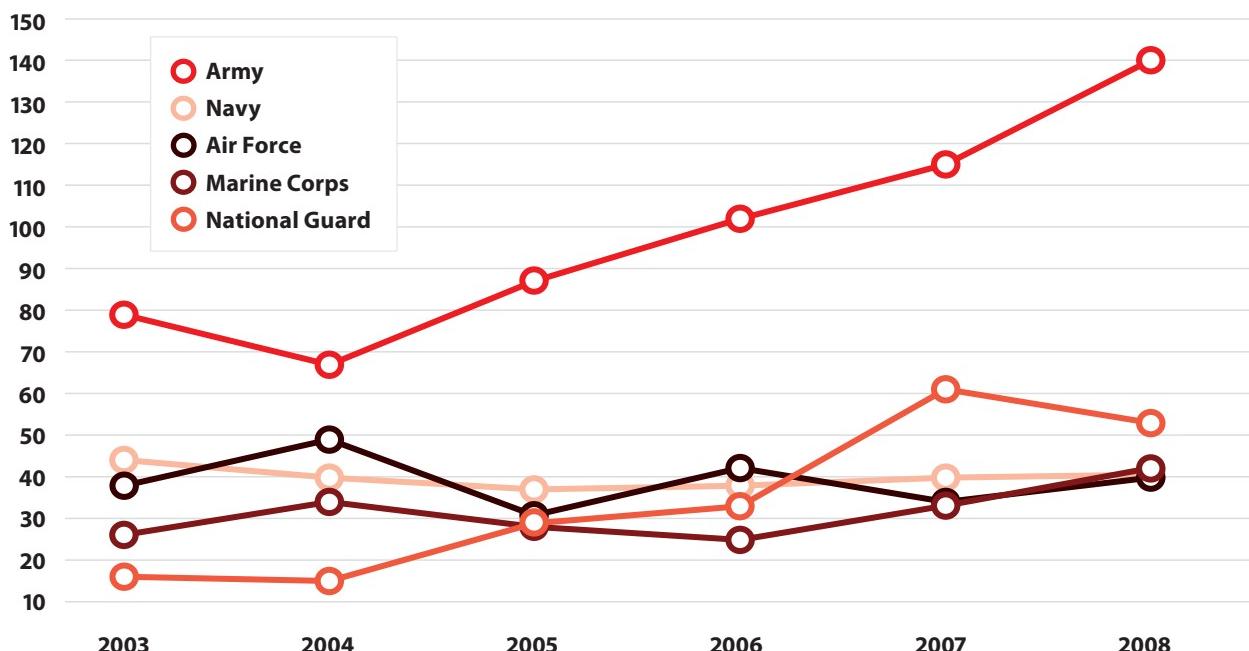
A Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program is now used throughout the Army, the National Guard and Army Reserve that places the same emphasis on mental health as physical health and fitness. A similar program is planned for family members and civilians who work for the Army. Chaplains also are leading relationship-strengthening programs, called Strong Bonds, for soldiers and families. A separate effort, Battlemind, helps troops and families prepare for the stresses of war and identify potential mental-health issues. The Navy and Marine Corps have likewise stepped up suicide-prevention efforts.

Last November, the Army contracted with the National Institutes of Mental Health to conduct a five-year, \$50 million study on soldier suicides that will help guide future prevention efforts.

The Army faces the challenge, understanding that it is daunting, long-term and unpredictable.

"Suicide is one of the most complex public-health problems," says Dr. Mark Kaplan, a professor of community health at Portland State University who served on the VA's Blue Ribbon Work Group on Suicide Prevention last year. "With all that we've learned, the suicide rate has not changed that much over time. The bottom line is, there's so much we don't understand."

## Suicides in the military, 2003-2008



Non-active duty suicides are investigated by civilian authorities, and therefore the military considers the figures more an estimate than a precise figure.

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That's true for all suicides, military or otherwise, in part because of a lack of data. The National Center for Health Statistics estimates there are 33,000 suicides in the United States each year. "We might be underestimating suicides in the general population by 25 to 50 percent," Kaplan says.

Because of the lack of comprehensive data, Kaplan and other researchers are wary of drawing conclusions about what's happening in the military.

"The evidence regarding combat-related experience seems to be mixed," he says. "There's often a lag time between combat exposure and post-traumatic stress disorder. Even World War II veterans, 40 years later, might experience the toll of PTSD."

Soldier suicides over the past six years illustrate how difficult it is to find definitive answers. The Army acknowledges that repeated deployments may be contributing to the overall increase in numbers, but that's only part of the issue. Roughly 40 percent of soldiers and 35 percent of Marines who have taken their own lives since 2003 never deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. A recent Army study also concluded that the majority of U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan who killed themselves did so during their first deployment. Suicides aren't just occurring among soldiers serving in the global war on terror.

"We have other veterans trying to commit suicide – guys who served in Vietnam, Korea, World War II, the Gulf War and Panama," says Jim Deremo, The American Legion's department service officer in North Dakota. He helped start Courage Carries On, a suicide-prevention campaign that reaches out to veterans and service-members in his state. Deremo says he sees an increase in PTSD among veterans after they retire. "When you are busy working and raising a family, you don't have time to think about it."

Elements of the problem are often traced back to date back to the Civil War, when soldiers were first allowed to take their guns home.

"That's when we see the rise in the number of suicides by firearms," Kaplan says. He points to a June 1865 *New York Times* obituary detailing how the man who fired the first shot on Fort Sumter later turned his gun on himself.

"Ownership and possession of firearms is very high among people who successfully complete suicide," Kaplan says. "Suicide involving guns provides a very limited window to intervene."

## More, or just better tracking?

For the fifth consecutive year, the Army faces a record number of suicides in its ranks. By the end of September, 177 soldiers reportedly had taken their own lives, of which 61 cases are still under investigation. During the same seven months of 2008, there were 111 suicides.

The numbers are significant, but suicide experts caution against drawing conclusions.

"There are too many unknowns," says Mark Kaplan, a professor of community health at Portland State University who specializes in the study of suicide. "Are there more suicides? Or are we better at detecting suicide? One of the reasons we may be seeing higher numbers is that we are better at tracking these cases and determining that they are suicides."

The Army, meanwhile, is trying to understand which of its suicide-prevention programs is working as it tries to reverse the trend.

"It's not that the Army lacks programs to confront the problem of suicide," says Brig. Gen. Colleen McGuire, director of the Army Suicide Prevention Task Force. "The long-term challenge is determining which programs are most effective for our soldiers."

Army spokesman Wayne Hall adds, "All we can do is everything we can do to change the culture, change people's thought processes and make people aware so they can recognize the signs and help their buddies."

The suicide trend reveals the need to learn more about what prompts people to take their own lives. Studies suggest there's something about the military experience, broadly defined, that contributes to suicide risk. One element could be the military's cultural taboo on expressing feelings, Kaplan says: "You are supposed to suspend your emotions when you go to war."

Problems that soldiers bring from their civilian lives also may prompt a crisis once they return from combat. Researchers at the University of Manchester concluded that young men were at higher risk of suicide after leaving the United Kingdom's armed forces. "This may reflect pre-service vulnerabilities rather than factors related to service experiences or discharge," the study stated.

Kaplan sums it up this way: "There is not one single thing that precipitates a tragic death by suicide. This is not like lung cancer, which we know is caused by smoking."

A study in the September *Journal of Trauma* also found that male and female veterans are more likely to kill themselves with guns than members of the general population. Despite the increasing number of females serving in the U.S. military, there's a significant lack of information about female veterans who take their own lives. Effective suicide prevention, the study says, will require addressing how easily veterans – especially females – obtain firearms, and how often they use one to commit suicide.

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**Pain vs. Death.** Tammy Schroeder has reached for a gun many times. "The pain is so bad that death is the only alternative," she says. The Air Force veteran has fought suicidal urges since she was raped while on active duty in 1983. "When you are sticking a gun in your mouth, you think, 'This is utopia. The pain is going to be over.' Unless you've been where I've been, you can't understand it."

Schroeder plunged into depression and started self-medicating with alcohol and over-the-counter drugs. She lost her marriage, her 2-year old and her infant. "It's not what he did to me," she says of the perpetrator. "It's what he took from me."

Two decades later, Schroeder finally told her story to a fellow veteran at the South Dakota American Legion's Mid-Winter Conference. That woman, Terry Towns, was office manager for the Sioux Falls Vet Center and got Schroeder in touch with counselors. It saved her life.

"I got such outstanding care," says Schroeder, who is featured in the Courage Carries On campaign as someone who benefited from seeking help. Even today, she keeps the telephone numbers for suicide-prevention hotlines on her refrigerator.

Although it took Schroeder years to seek counseling, most male soldiers never reach out. "So many people who are returning after multiple deployments are men who don't want to talk about their problems," says Kaplan, the Portland State University suicide expert. The stigma of mental illness remains powerful. So the question for the military is, "How do you educate young soldiers to seek help?"

"I think the way we get rid of the stigma is that we continue to educate others and talk about it," Graham says, "and let people know there is help, there is care for you out there. Going to behavioral health doesn't mean someone is crazy. It means something is wrong."

Psychological problems are not always the issue. Many military suicides involve younger soldiers with relationship or financial problems – and easy access to firearms.

"Men feel very uncomfortable when the ground shifts under them," Kaplan says. "They succumb to a sense of shame, a loss of control. Suicide is a way of taking control over their life."

Financial and family issues, he says, could be dealt with by social workers instead of counselors, which would reduce the stigma associated with getting help.

## VA calls suicide rate among veterans 'unacceptable'

Every 16 minutes, someone in the United States commits suicide; each year, about 5,000 of those victims are veterans. Such numbers are unacceptable, said Dr. Jan Kemp, VA's national suicide-prevention coordinator.

"It's a very tragic situation when someone suffers the conflicts of war and undergoes the trials and tribulations of being put in harm's way, survives that, then comes home and chooses to die by suicide," said Kemp, addressing attendees at The American Legion's 91st National Convention in Louisville, Ky., on Aug. 22.

"We're failing them. It's all of our responsibility to own up to that. There's no reason any veteran in the United States of America should die by his own hand because he thinks people don't care, and that there's no way to make that situation better."

While many officials and experts are concerned about suicide attempts among recently returned veterans, Kemp said she's equally concerned about the older veterans population.

"We're all starting to suffer some losses," she said. "Friends of ours are dying or getting into terminal or chronic illnesses. There have been some economic changes. Retirement isn't what it used to be for some of us. Those are really critical times in people's lives."

VA has established a comprehensive suicide-prevention program, which includes coordinators at every VA medical center, pocket-sized suicide risk-assessment cards, and a national suicide-prevention hotline. The center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with the option to speak to a veteran at all times.

Organizations such as The American Legion play a key role in the fight to prevent suicides among veterans.

"Your main goal in helping us do this is to carry that (hotline) number with you at all times, to carry those cards," she said. "Keep them in your (post) to make sure people have access to those, and to say, 'I'm going to make this call for you. I'll help you do this.' Or, 'Here's the number. Let me know when you've called.'"

Legionnaires can also help Kemp's office by taking part in VA's SAVE program: *search for possible signs of suicide, ask questions, validate the life of a potential suicide victim, and encourage treatment and expedite the process of getting help.*

"Suicide risk assessment is a process, not an event," Kemp said. "Most suicidal ideas are associated with the presence of an underlying, treatable disorder. We are relying on all of you to help us out."

VA National Suicide Prevention Hotline:

**(800) 273-8255 (dial 1)**

Online: [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/veterans/default.aspx](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/veterans/default.aspx)



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harrowing flights in a B-24 bomber and somehow made it back to the U.S. Besides the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star, my father cherished this watch because it was a reminder of the best part of the war for any soldier—the homecoming.

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Lt. Col. Ross Waltemath, of the Indiana National Guard, agrees. "The majority of our folks who are in crisis have marital problems or financial problems, not psychological problems."

**Transition Assistance.** Kaplan says a more seamless transition from the military to VA and civilian life can reduce the stress on soldiers who are demobilizing or leaving the service. Travis Rhoads knows this territory firsthand. He re-enlisted in 2007, following a three-year break from the Army, after finding it difficult to support his wife and four children as a truck driver for a soft-drink company. Four months into his combat tour in Iraq, he tried to kill himself.

Rhoads was shipped home and enrolled in a program designed to streamline the handoff of servicemembers from DoD to VA. Instead, it took a year for him to make his way through the system, get the medical exams, and receive a disability rating so he could be placed on long-term temporary medical leave from the Army. The delays, paperwork and uncertainty exacerbated his anxiety, making it hard to find a job.

"There I am, trying to juggle so much with finances and my medical board, keep my treatment going and keep my sanity," Rhoads says. "I don't know how many times I had to ask, 'Where's my paperwork?' I'm exhausted."

Adele Kubein watched her daughter go through a frustrating three-year transition from the military to VA after she came home from Iraq in 2004 with a broken leg, traumatic brain injury and a battered, suicidal mind. Her daughter had served in combat for 10 months as a .50-caliber gunner and field mechanic with the Oregon Army National Guard. "She was a total wreck. I went to the barracks and there she was at the end of the hall with a cane, bent over and crying," Kubein says.

She believes the counseling offered by the Returning Veterans Project saved her daughter's life. The Oregon-based group, staffed by counselors who provide free services to servicemembers and families, arranged for a therapist with combat experience in Vietnam to care for her daughter.

Such concerns resonate with the people who established Courage Carries On. Despite assurances from the military, many servicemembers still believe counseling will hurt their careers, Deremo says. Some veterans, especially from the Vietnam era, refuse to go to VA because of how they were treated when they first returned home.



Image Gold

## Where to turn for help

New suicide-prevention resources are available to help reduce suicides in the U.S. military and among veterans, including:

VA Suicide Prevention Lifeline/National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: **(800) 273-TALK (8255)**

Military OneSource Crisis Intervention Line: **(800) 342-9647**

Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline: **(800) 984-8523**

Tragedy Assistance Program: **(800) 959-TAPS (8277)**

## Web sites

Navy Suicide Prevention: [www.suicide.navy.mil](http://www.suicide.navy.mil)

Marine Corps: [www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent)

Tragedy Assistance Program: [www.taps.org/](http://www.taps.org/)

Courage Carries On: [www.couragecarrieson.org](http://www.couragecarrieson.org)

The American Legion: [www.legend.org](http://www.legend.org)

Returning Veterans Project: [returningveterans.org](http://returningveterans.org)

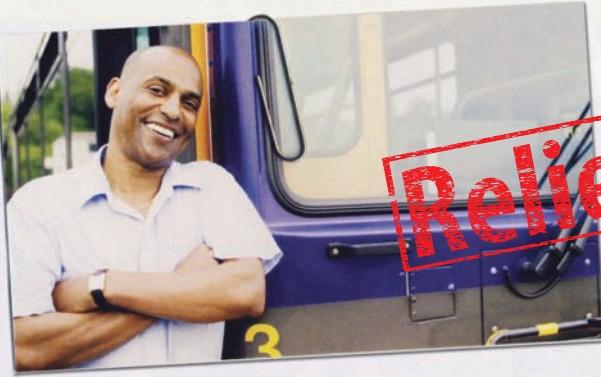
## Other resources

The North Dakota American Legion offers its Courage Carries On program to other state Legions for a minimal charge. Contact Jim Deremo, North Dakota Legion department service officer, at **(701) 451-4646** or e-mail [jim.deremo@va.gov](mailto:jim.deremo@va.gov).

To learn more about the Indiana National Guard's mobile crisis intervention teams, contact Lt. Col. Ross Waltemath, **(800) 237-2850, ext. 85450**, or Capt. Elizabeth Williams, **(317) 247-3300, ext. 85474**.

That's tragic. "Don't wait 23 years to get help like I did," Schroeder says. "You hurt so many other people." For her, there's an equally pressing reason to make the call whenever she's feeling her worst. "If I kill myself," she says, remembering the man who assaulted her more than 20 years ago, "he's won." ☰

*Ken Olsen is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.*



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Illustration by Matt Hall

# The Magi

*On Christmas Eve 1943,  
three unexpected visitors  
brought peace to a  
war-torn Italian town.*

BY ANTHONY V. CERVONE

I was born in the little town of Giovinazzo, a typical southern Italian coastal town 11 miles northwest of Bari. Its origins can be traced to the colonizing ventures of the ancient Greeks, and parts of the old town go back to Roman times. In most of the centuries since then, life in Giovinazzo was relatively quiet, though it has seen many important visitors pass through.

The apostles Peter and Paul could have easily taken the eastern route on their way to Rome but used instead the Mediterranean to get there. St. Francis of Assisi probably passed through on his way to Bari in order to reach the Holy Land. Crusaders traveled from all parts of Europe, regrouped in Rome, got the papal blessing and reached Bari in order to sail to their destination. Later, marauding bands of pirates regularly raided the city, taking everything useful. Today, the town's main natural resources are sunshine, plenty of free time, and plenty of able-bodied young men and women without work.

The Christmas season is the highlight of the year and a source of wonderful memories. When I last visited Giovinazzo at Christmas, in 1989, the holiday was celebrated the same way it has always been. In the evening, we could hear the sound of fireworks in the streets and piazzas. It was cold and wet; the street lights only accentuated the dreary atmosphere of the evening. I remember watching on television ghastly images of the Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, who had just been captured, defiantly demanding an immediate release.

Such images reminded me of similar circumstances when Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was captured in 1945. And my thoughts took me to the war I grew up in – on another Christmas Eve, when the darkness and deprivation of our lives were interrupted by an intervention of goodness.

That year, even though the war was at its height,

## from Texas

my father, Vito, built a *presepio* (Nativity scene) to prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth. When it was finished, he carefully unwrapped figurines that would populate the scene: Mary, Joseph and a manger for Jesus; an ox, donkey, shepherds and sheep. Then Vito placed more figurines to depict everyday life at the time of Christ: a fisherman with his pole (placed by a brook with running water), a woman washing clothes, and a butcher.

The three Magi, initially placed at the farthest point from the main grotto of the *presepio*, were moved almost daily so their arrival would coincide with the 12 nights after the birth of *Gesubambino* (Baby Jesus).

Finally, Christmas Eve came. Everyone was dressed in his best clothes and, at about midnight, a little procession was improvised, with each person carrying a small candle. It began with me, the youngest of four children, bearing the figurine of Baby Jesus. Everyone else followed and sang the traditional Italian Christmas song "*Tu scendi dalle stelle, o Re del Cielo*" (Oh, King of Heaven, you come down from the stars). Not everyone sang in tune or in unison, but it did not matter. We were all taken by the emotion of the moment, as we asked *Gesubambino* to come and bring us peace and happiness.

Christmas 1943 was memorable for other reasons. My father had recently returned from Albania, where he had worked building roads, but now had no job because of the uncertain political and military situation. The Americans had invaded Sicily the previous summer and – along with British, Indian, Moroccan, Yugoslavian and Polish forces – were making their way north. The Germans, who left Giovinazzo in September, were regrouping and preparing a counterattack to stop the invaders on a line from Cassino eastward to the Adriatic that they called the Gustav Line.

By winter, U.S. and British military convoys were heading north on State Road 16, which crossed our town. From our home across from the railway station, we observed similar troop movements on flat-car trains.

One evening in mid-December, as my brother Paolo was crossing the highway on his way home, a Jeep with lights dimmed and with three human shadows on board stopped in front of him. They

were U.S. soldiers looking for a cantina where they could order a glass of wine. It was late and my brother told them that the only cantina in town was already closed; he suggested instead that they could come to our home, where my father spoke English and would be happy to offer them a glass of wine.

The Americans invited my brother aboard the Jeep and, in a few minutes, they were at our doorstep. My father welcomed them warmly. They turned out to be three airmen from Texas, stationed at the Gioia del Colle air base not far from Giovinazzo. From my 5-year-old perspective, they looked very tall, carried huge pistols, and were very courteous.

My father, Vito, told them he had been a soldier in the U.S. Army during the First World War and had fought at Verdun. He then showed them his two medals and discharge papers; all that was news to me. Later, I came to understand why such information had been kept quiet over the years: the Fascists had looked at my father with some suspicion because he had been a U.S. citizen.

The American pilots, feeling comfortable and secure in our house, embarked on a long and amiable conversation with Papa. Of course, I did not understand English. But I thought it was rather strange and confusing that the enemy who had caused us so much fear and anxiety for two years with their aerial bombardments should be not only in my home, but also be so friendly and congenial.

I looked at my father's face and saw he was happy. His fear that, for whatever reason, they might take him away was soon dispelled.

When the conversation ended, the only bottle of wine we had was empty. My father apologized for not having any more wine or food to offer them, and the Americans thanked my parents for their hospitality. The three airmen said only that they would return to see us before they shipped out.

Throughout the war, food had become more scarce for us. Meat, sugar, fish and butter were the first items to disappear completely from our table. Everything was strictly rationed. The Fascist rank and file, from the mayor on down, were well fed; the few land-owning families and the clergy ate moderately well, and the rest of us just had to make do. One night, my older sister told my mother that I was crying from hunger. Her reply was to put me to bed anyway, because there was no food.

Two days before Christmas, the *presepio* was completed and ready for the following night's ceremony. Yet there was sadness in the air despite my parents' attempt to disguise it, for there was no food to serve for the traditional Christmas Eve

dinner. During the day, I noticed my father standing in front of the *presepio* whispering, "Gesubam-bino, pensaci tu" (Please, Christ Child, help us).

That evening, the U.S. Jeep stopped in front of our home and out came the three Texan pilots, their arms filled with food of all types: canned corned beef, a whole cooked ham, a whole turkey, gallon cans of powdered milk and powdered eggs, chocolate bars, chewing gum, cigarettes, nylon stockings and other assorted goods my family had not seen for years.

We all stood there and watched the unloading operation, speechless. As my father tried to find words of thanks, he was clearly overwhelmed by such abundance. My mother began to prepare dinner with the practicality and lightning speed that women show in such situations. By the time the family and guests had settled down from the excitement, my mother was bringing dinner to the table.

The pilots thanked her but said they had already eaten at the base; the food was all for us to enjoy. But they joined us at the table, sipped wine, and watched with smiles and satisfaction the effect of their generosity. Thus, the Christmas Eve dinner that only a few hours before had seemed impossible became the most opulent dinner I had seen in my short lifetime.

I noticed the Americans' politeness as they attempted to communicate with the rest of the family through the few Italian words they knew. I was intrigued that they only spoke in infinitives, and later realized they did not know how to conjugate Italian verbs. No matter. Their warmth, friendliness and generosity came through their fractured Italian. For the first time, I felt that our family was being protected – not only because of the food these Americans provided us, but because they had become our true liberators. They knew how to win the hearts and minds of conquered populations. Nothing and no one could harm us anymore.

From that day forward, we looked at the B-17s in the sky and knew their bombs were not for us. On Christmas Eve 1943, the war ended for my family and for the whole town of Giovinazzo. ¶

**Author's note:** This story is dedicated to my father, Vito Cervone (1892-1951).

Anthony V. Cervone, Ph.D., is a retired professor of Romance languages and Latin at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. He now resides in Winter Park, Fla.

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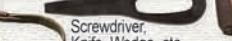


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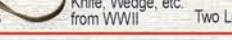
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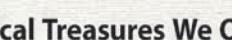
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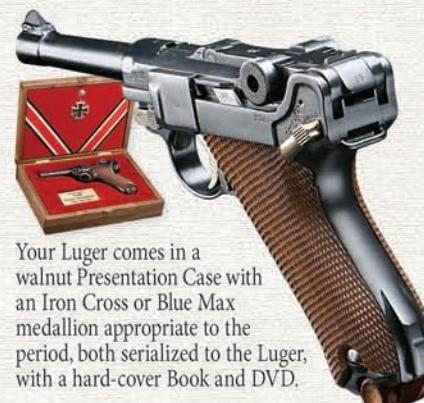
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# THE BOY WITH THE 40-YEAR-OLD KIDNEY

*With COTA's help, 3-year-old Gabriel received a kidney from his father, Air Force Tech Sgt. Don Broghammer.* Photo courtesy Broghammer family

**A Legion-supported organization, COTA helps hundreds of families each year.**

**BY MARGARET DAVIDSON**

From the moment he entered this world, little Gabriel and those around him faced an uphill battle to keep him from leaving it. He was diagnosed with kidney failure. Doctors gave the infant less than a 5-percent chance of winning the battle.

But Gabriel did win, with a kidney donated by his father, Air Force Tech Sgt. Don Broghammer, and assistance from the Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA), which helped raise funds for transplant-related expenses.

Today, Gabriel is a lively 3-year-old who happily displays a newfound strength in a photo featured in COTA's 2009 calendar. Only two years ago, he endured multiple surgeries and weeks of hospitalization, with feeding tubes and medication a staple of his daily routine.

Gabriel's mother, Christine, knew from tests during her pregnancy that her baby would face various medical challenges. He underwent his first surgery – to address bladder problems – while he was still in his mother's uterus. Gabriel's parents, who live in Rapid City, S.D., took him to large urban hospitals where they thought doctors could

best respond to the medical complexities they faced during the delivery and subsequent procedures. Next, Gabriel faced life-threatening kidney problems. At 4 months old, he started dialysis treatment to remove the waste products his malfunctioning kidneys were unable to handle.

His parents learned at the hospital how to administer the treatment, and they were able to take him home, where the dialysis continued for 10 hours each night. They also had to feed him through a tube. The schedule was so demanding that Christine had to quit her teaching job.

But Gabriel failed to grow enough, a common problem for children in similar circumstances. So his parents decided to pursue a transplant.

Through friends with a child who had kidney failure, the Broghammers learned that the University of Minnesota Medical Center was a leading provider of pediatric organ transplants; they decided to take him there.

Testing determined that Don was a good match, and on Jan. 9, 2008, doctors performed a successful transplant of a kidney from father to son.

The costs of the surgery and related expenses



are enormous. Gabriel is "a \$3 million kid," Christine says. "I was scared we were going to go broke paying all these bills."

Before the transplant operation, the Broghamers turned to COTA for assistance. The nonprofit organization helps children and young adults with fundraising and support for the families. During fiscal 2008, the organization raised nearly \$4 million for transplant-related expenses and helped 111 new families.

COTA also promotes donations of organs, bone marrow and tissue. Patients up to 21 years old who need or have had a life-saving organ, bone-marrow, cord-blood or stem-cell transplant are eligible. COTA works with individuals of any age to help with transplant-related costs if the need is caused by a genetic disease, such as cystic fibrosis or sickle cell anemia.

COTA's assistance comes in many forms. The organization trains and organizes volunteers in patients' home communities, assisting them in planning successful fundraising events and activities. COTA also helps spread the word through local media and Web sites, and serves as a trustee for the funds that are raised.

Since 1986, COTA has worked with more than 100,000 volunteers throughout the United States to organize fundraising activities and donor-awareness events, raising nearly \$50 million for patients.

In addition to the cost of a transplant, bills include medication to prevent organ rejection, recipients' and families' travel to medical centers, families' lodging and food, follow-up lab tests and sometimes a subsequent transplant, which children like Gabriel – who receive organs from older persons – may need someday.

The costs of transplant operations may not be fully covered by health insurance; policies vary widely. Many insurance companies have limits on the amount of medical coverage they will provide over a lifetime. Some have caps on the amount they will pay per year or per incident. And most plans have deductibles, which may be 20 percent or more of the transplant's costs, in addition to co-payments



## COTA named newest American Legion partner

In May, the Legion's National Executive Committee passed a resolution adopting the Children's Organ Transplant Association as an official program. The resolution authorizes the Legion to work directly with COTA to promote its mutual aims and purposes of ensuring that children receive life-saving transplants.

Since 1989, the Legion has provided nearly \$250,000 in grants to COTA, which calls its nationwide volunteers "Miracle Makers" because of the hope they give to children and young adults who desperately need a second chance at life.

COTA's Miracle Makers program enhances its effectiveness by identifying volunteers across the country, including Legionnaires, who will work on behalf of COTA and its client families.

COTA is a national charity that provides fundraising assistance for children who need life-saving transplants. Its priority is to assure that no child or young adult is denied a transplant, or excluded from a transplant waiting list, because of financial need. All funds raised in honor of patients are used by COTA for transplant-related expenses.

### For more information:

 [www.cota.org](http://www.cota.org)

 (800) 366-2682

that patients are charged for health-care services.

According to COTA's 2007-2008 annual report, "(N)o coverage pays all costs associated with a transplant. Even with insurance, very few families have the resources to pay expenses related to a transplant." In some cases, fundraising has not been able to cover costs, and COTA has helped by providing extra money beyond amounts raised.

Among those helping to provide COTA with funds is The American Legion, which has contributed about \$250,000 at the national level – and from individual posts – since 1989, said Rick Lofgren, COTA's president. The Legion's Child Welfare Foundation regularly awards grants for COTA projects. In 2009, it provided \$40,000 to the

organization for its Volunteers in Action program.

Among Legionnaire supporters is Tony Lori, who for more than 20 years has been placing coin-collection jars across New Jersey and has raised more than \$80,000, mostly in change. The Legion also tries to increase the number of organs available for transplant.

"A lot of our work for COTA has helped make the public aware of the need," said Robert Caudell, executive secretary of the Legion's Child Welfare Foundation.

The Legion's National Executive Committee decided in May to formalize its relationship with COTA by approving a resolution for the Legion to "adopt and participate in the programs" of COTA, and encourage its departments and posts to work with and support COTA's fundraising efforts.

Across the country, COTA-assisted friends and neighbors stage events on behalf of the patients. In Wisconsin, volunteers turned to "cowchip bingo" to raise funds. After a high-school football game where they sold raffle tickets, they released a cow onto a grassy playing field marked with numbered squares. She wandered the field looking for the right spot, and when nature called – B-I-N-G-O! A lucky win for the person who bought the ticket for that square. Concession sales and face-painting in the high school's team colors contributed to a total day's take of about \$10,000.

In New Jersey, a golf outing netted more than \$20,000 through 120 registered golfers and the help of sponsors, each of whom had a sign advertising its services at one of the 18 holes. Wagers for holes-in-one, longest drives and "closest to the pin" – along with merchandise sales and an auction – contributed to the total amount raised.

Car washes, dodgeball tournaments and pets showing off their Halloween costumes have also helped bring in money during fundrais-

ing efforts. "Our average campaign raises about \$40,000," Lofgren says. Much of the money goes for travel and lodging associated with the medical care.

Financially, the Broghammers were more fortunate than many organ recipients. Most of the costs were covered by Don's military benefits – he's stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City, S.D. – and the Medicare benefits for which Gabriel was eligible. As a result, about \$15,000 raised by the community could be used for travel expenses and for medicine. Christine says that Gabriel's medicine is rather expensive; therefore, they have to make the necessary co-payments.

"We feel very lucky to have had so much help throughout the years," Christine says.

Although Gabriel's progress has been substantial, he still faces some serious medical problems. He has bladder issues, and though he eats meals with his family, the little boy – who didn't eat or drink for a year, except through a feeding tube – still gets his medicine and extra liquids through a tube.

Nonetheless, his relieved mother, who knows she has faced much more anxious times in the past, said, "He's

a normal little boy."

Gabriel is likely to need a second transplant sometime in the future, since he has a 40-year-old kidney, Christine said.

Other children will face that same future need, and COTA pledges to be there again for them. "We always say, 'Once a COTA patient, always a COTA patient,'" Lofgren said.

For Gabriel Broghammer and his parents, that's reassuring. "Right now we're good," Christine says. But, she quickly adds, "It's nice having a cushion there." ☺

*Margaret Davidson is a freelance writer living in Wisconsin.*



*Christine and Don Broghammer's son Gabriel, 3, will likely need another kidney transplant. When that time comes, COTA will be there again to help with medical costs.* Photo courtesy Broghammer family

**Learn more about other recipients of Child Welfare Foundation grants for 2010:**

 [www.legion.org/childwelfare](http://www.legion.org/childwelfare)

# Life is short...or maybe not.

**Top Harvard researcher says it's "the Holy Grail of aging research."\***

*...as seen on  
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**BOSTON, MA**—Leading medical scientists are learning that resveratrol, a natural substance found in red wine, is rewriting the rules on the science of aging.

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**Harvard Medical School, Johns Hopkins, Salk Institute  
and UC Davis Medical Research Proves That  
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LEGIONNAIRES: THE FIRST GENERATION

# Harold W. Ross

**He founded The New Yorker magazine in 1925.**

A Legionnaire from the very beginning, Harold W. Ross attended the Paris Caucus in March 1919, serving on The American Legion's Committee on Constitution and the American Expeditionary Force Executive Committee.

While a soldier in France, Ross became the editor of the military newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*. He also met his future wife, Jane C. Grant, who had left her job with *The New York Times* to join the YMCA Entertainment Corps overseas. After the two journalists returned stateside, they got married.

His wife went back to her previous job, and Ross eventually became editor of *The American Legion Weekly*. The couple lived on Grant's income and saved his Legion paychecks for the day when they might be able to start their own publication.

In those days, the Legion editor and his wife moved in highly literary circles. Their brownstone apartment on 47th Street became a gathering place for artists and celebrities, including George Gershwin, Edna St. Vincent Millay, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Irving Berlin, Dorothy Parker and Harpo Marx.

Ross and his wife finally got the financial backing they needed to start publishing their own magazine. While Ross had several ideas, including a "Marine Gazette," his wife wanted to produce a weekly aimed at the tastes of the New York urban crowd. Thus, *The New Yorker* magazine was born on Feb. 21, 1925.

By the early 1940s, the publication had about 200,000 subscribers and some of the highest advertising revenue in the country.

As an editor, Ross usually had many questions for his authors. While John Hersey worked to finish his 1946 article on the bombing of Hiroshima, he was pelted by hundreds of questions and comments about the landmark piece from Ross.

Like many editors, Ross often felt mistreated by those who held the purse strings. "Good God, I have leaned over backwards playing fair with this organization until my spine is like a horseshoe .... I've kept this publication going single-handed a lot of the time, saving it in crisis after crisis brought on by stupidity and neglect."

Ross had little good to say about two of his major competitors, *Time* and *Life*. He once wrote in a note to author E.B. White, "*Life* does a story on the placid and historic Thames and finds nude sunbathers on its banks. This must be the fifty-eighth way of working in naked women."

- Philip M. Callaghan



Corbis

## The dossier

Born to parents George and Ida in Aspen, Colo., on Nov. 6, 1892.

By 25, Ross had worked for at least 10 newspapers, including the *Atlanta Journal* and *Denver Post*.

Enlisted in the Army in May 1917. Served with the 18th Engineers Railway Regiment.

Worked for *Stars and Stripes* in Paris from February 1918 to April 1919.

Discharged from military service at St. Aignan, France, on May 1, 1919.

Editor of *The Home Sector*, a weekly publication for veterans returning home from France, from September 1919 to April 1920.

Editor of *The American Legion Weekly* from 1920 to 1924.

Married Jane C. Grant, writer for *The New York Times*, in 1920.

Founding editor of *The New Yorker* magazine, 1925-1951.

Died from lung cancer Dec. 6, 1951, in Boston, age 59.

\$1,385 in Membership Prizes—See page 12  
**The AMERICAN Legion Weekly**

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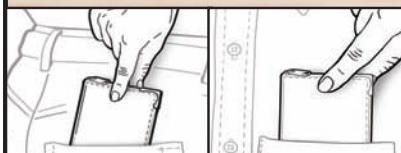
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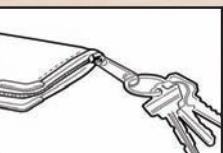


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## [VERBATIM]

“Take a deep breath, be patient, wait a couple of days, make another phone call and cut everyone a little slack, because it’s a little hectic out there, folks.”

**Dr. William Schaffner**, a flu-vaccine specialist at Vanderbilt University, on public demand for H1N1 inoculations

“This is the new normal. We aren’t going back.”

**Donald Keprta**, president of Dominick’s, a Midwest supermarket chain, which has cut prices by as much as 30 percent on thousands of items. According to the Associated Press, the recession has created a “shopper’s paradise.”

“When I look in the mirror, I don’t see a female. I see a soldier.”

**Command Sgt. Maj. Teresa King**, the first woman to head the Army’s drill-sergeant school

“We did not discuss this at all.”

**Dmitry Pankin**, Russia’s deputy finance minister, denying reports in Britain’s *Independent* that Gulf Arab states, as well as China, Russia, Japan and France, are in secret talks to end the use of the U.S. dollar to trade oil

“If we had thought about how to make a lot of money, we would have chosen Chicago.”

**International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge**, defending the IOC’s decision to award the 2016 Olympic Games to Rio de Janeiro

“All the American women had purple noses and gray lips and their faces were chalk white from terrible powder. I recognized that the United States would be my life’s work.”

**Helena Rubinstein**, cosmetics executive, recalling her arrival in America in 1914

## [HISTORY]

# ‘NOW WHAT?’

## A survivor’s recollection of the morning of Dec. 7, 1941

**When Firman Balza and a friend decided to join the Navy in January 1941, his father strongly advised against it. “You know we’re going to have a war,” the elder Balza told his son. “You get in a war, you could get yourself killed!”**

**Firman responded, “Pa, if I don’t go in the Navy then I’m going to go someplace. Now, if I go in the Navy, you’ll know where I am, and you’ll know there’ll be somebody there looking after me. But if I go someplace else, Pa, nobody’s going to know where I am but me, myself and I.”**

**Reluctantly, his father agreed, and on Jan. 31, 1941, Balza began training at Great Lakes. Not a year later, the 18-year-old from Green Bay, Wis., was aboard the battleship Maryland when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.**

Just before 8 o’clock, I’m looking out over Ford Island, talking to a first-class gunner’s mate and a first-class cook. We’re talking about how if the Japanese attack the fleet at Pearl Harbor and sink a ship in the channel, all these hundreds of ships in the harbor can’t get out. And all of a sudden, here comes a Val dive bomber, right past the ship and over the administration building to the seaplane hangar down on the south end of the island. You saw fire and this great big puff of smoke. And then they just came like you poked your stick in a hornet’s nest. From every direction there were airplanes going this way and that way. How they didn’t run into each other is beyond me. For the next couple of minutes it was just one right after another.

Now, the *Oklahoma*’s tied up to us. Bombers are coming in and they’re lacing the *Okie* with torpedoes. They’re hitting below the armor belt and opening up these great big holes like they’re opening up a can of tomatoes.

“All hands, take cover!” Now, where are you going to take cover? You’ve got no place to run and no place to hide.





Photo by Mike Roemer

Then you hear, "General quarters! All hands, man your battle stations! This is no s\*\*t!" That's the next word you heard.

I go to my battle station and look around. I don't see anybody. Nobody shows up. So I do the things I'm supposed to do. I put the transfer switch on battery and start to crank the gun out. Then, after I get her cranked out, I say, "That doesn't make any sense. We can't shoot this damn thing in here anyhow. It's a surface weapon."

A bomb knocked out our forward switchboard and we lost all our electrical power to bring up ammunition from the magazines. We formed a human chain from the magazine clear on up to the boat deck and handed ammunition from one guy to the next to get it up there. That's how we functioned. We didn't stand there wondering what we were going to do next. We all did what we had to do. There was no panic. It wasn't like the movie. I heard a lot of cussing and people running here and there, but no panic. Everybody had something to do, and he was doing it.

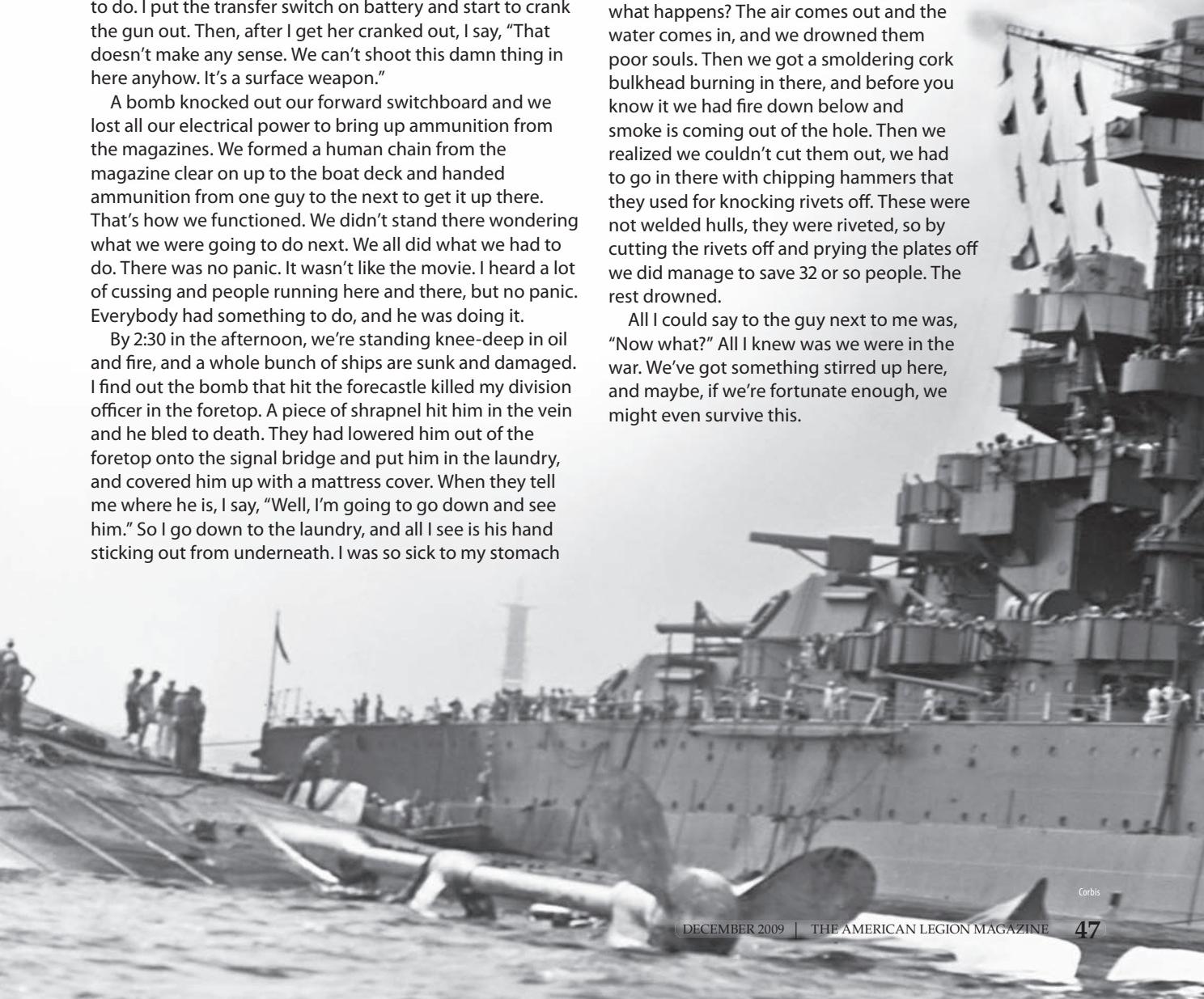
By 2:30 in the afternoon, we're standing knee-deep in oil and fire, and a whole bunch of ships are sunk and damaged. I find out the bomb that hit the forecastle killed my division officer in the foretop. A piece of shrapnel hit him in the vein and he bled to death. They had lowered him out of the foretop onto the signal bridge and put him in the laundry, and covered him up with a mattress cover. When they tell me where he is, I say, "Well, I'm going to go down and see him." So I go down to the laundry, and all I see is his hand sticking out from underneath. I was so sick to my stomach

I didn't eat for three days. To see that young officer there underneath that mattress cover ... Howard Crow was a nice officer from Texas, a very nice man, he was going to marry a girl, and there he is, laying there dead.

All over the place, dead people ... oh my God, every place you looked, their skin burned off. After they're in the water for a few days they're swelled up and blue. Guys went around in a motor boat picking up these dead bodies. They would be covered with oil, just black. They would get a boat loaded and then pitch them up on a dock and from there into a dump truck, like they were hauling cordwood - people who either drowned or got burned so bad they couldn't fend for themselves. Some got blown off the ship, some jumped off the ship, some of them didn't have no place to go but jump off.

We were trying to rescue those poor devils who were in that overturned hull right next to us. First we tried cutting with a burning torch. The hull was an inch thick. When we finally got inside we let the air out, and then what happens? The air comes out and the water comes in, and we drowned them poor souls. Then we got a smoldering cork bulkhead burning in there, and before you know it we had fire down below and smoke is coming out of the hole. Then we realized we couldn't cut them out, we had to go in there with chipping hammers that they used for knocking rivets off. These were not welded hulls, they were riveted, so by cutting the rivets off and prying the plates off we did manage to save 32 or so people. The rest drowned.

All I could say to the guy next to me was, "Now what?" All I knew was we were in the war. We've got something stirred up here, and maybe, if we're fortunate enough, we might even survive this.



Corbis

**[FILM]**

*Some of Norwich University's student producers (from top of stairs) include Virginia Wong, Joe Burleigh, Amanda Plachek, Steven Weber, Jordan Lewis and Brad Panasiti.* Marty Callaghan

## Students produce 'War at Home'

Several cadets at Norwich University are producing a documentary, "The War at Home," that examines difficulties returning veterans sometimes have in readjusting to the civilian world. The project, led by communications professor William Estill, began last year and is now in its final stages.

One of the program's producers, Amanda Plachek of Williams, Calif., also worked on an earlier production, "Vermont Fallen," a documentary about servicemembers from the state who died in the war on terrorism. After finishing that program, Plachek "wondered what the next project would be. Then we got a grant to do 'The War at Home.' We weren't so interested at first, because we'd just finished working on a very depressing topic. But we eventually picked up on how important this new program was, and we all became really interested in getting it done."

Another producer, Steven Weber of Fords, N.J., worked last year on a sequel, "Vermont Fallen: The Biographies," which celebrated the lives of those Vermont warriors who fell in battle. With that experience, he was also recruited for "The War at Home" and interviewed several combat veterans on camera.

"I'll never forget the story one veteran told me," Weber said. "One of his Marines got killed in a very unfortunate event. And that story put things in perspective for us – anything can happen over there. You could be there one moment and not there the next." That veteran said something else that left an impression on Plachek: "There's a lot of split seconds in the day. And in a split second, someone could be gone."

Virginia Wong of Kapolei, Hawaii, is the only student producer who is also a veteran. She enlisted in the Army and served overseas. Interviewing other veterans "brings me

back and reminds me that I went through some of those experiences, too," she says. "You don't really think that you have so much in common until you hear some of these interviews."

Wong joined in "The War at Home" project when Estill pulled her aside one day after class and told her about his idea. "He wanted me to be on it because I'm a veteran, and he thought it might be easier for some veterans to talk if I was around. Maybe I could ask some of the questions that someone else might feel uncomfortable about asking."

The more she thought about it, the more Wong knew that the program "was going to be beneficial. I wanted it to be used as an education tool for others, so that's why I joined the production."

Having a veteran on board as a producer definitely helps, Plachek said. "The only experience we (cadets) have with the war is from books or movies, the Internet, things like that. So it's good to have a veteran on the project to kind of be our eyes and ears."

The cadets hope to finish "The War at Home" by the end of this year, Estill says. As they near completion, a premiere will be planned for the university's Corps of Cadets, the community, families from the "Vermont Fallen" project, and those former students deploying to Afghanistan in January.

**Editor's note:** Weber, Plachek and Wong graduated from Norwich University last May. Weber has delayed his military career and currently works for Authentic Entertainment, a production company in Burbank, Calif. Wong is in the Virginia National Guard, awaiting orders for training at Fort Sill, Okla. Plachek will head to airborne school in Fort Benning, Ga., then join the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, at Fort Bragg, N.C.

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[CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH]

## Eagle Scout hopeful teaches shooting to injured vets

For his Eagle Scout project, Tim Sherry of Highlands Ranch, Colo., found a way to bring his favorite sport – professional shooting – to impaired veterans.

"I helped coach at a 2005 Paralympic shooting event, and I've always thought about just how fun it was and the looks the



*Eagle Scout Tim Sherry of Highlands Ranch, Colo., has been involved in shooting since he was 7 years old. Courtesy Tim Sherry*

shooters had in their eyes," says Sherry, 15, who shoots for the NTC Shooting Club Juniors affiliated with Post 5.

So he coordinated a one-day outing to teach rifle shooting to a handful of disabled veterans of all eras, including some who served in Iraq and even Patton's Army. A short competition gave participants a taste of professional shooting, and a few enjoyed the experience so much they began practicing with the Junior Olympic team in Colorado Springs.

"My whole goal was that they enjoy themselves, and maybe one or two of them get into shooting," Sherry says.

Shooting depends more on concentration and focus than physical function, making it ideal for those with service-related impairments, he says.

A U.S. Olympic Committee put Sherry in contact with a Warrior Transition Unit at Fort Carson, which sent a few participants. And Launa Stiles – a widow of an a servicemember killed in Iraq – contributed \$800 in gift cards to honor her husband's memory. Sherry used them to purchase equipment and fly in Josh Olson, a former Army staff sergeant who is a successful Paralympic shooter. Olson, who lost his right leg during his deployment, acted as a counselor for the event.

"He showed them what it's like and what you can do with the sport," Sherry said.

[CAREERS]

## Big-name businesses court veterans at Legion job fair

It's not hard to understand why a company like Wal-Mart chose to attend the Heroes to Hometowns Transition and Benefits Fair at The American Legion's 91st National Convention in Louisville, Ky.

"We're always looking for great people," said Cindy Frederico, Wal-Mart's marketing and human resources manager in Louisville. "We think this is an opportunity to find them."

Wal-Mart wasn't alone in that belief, as 83 corporations, businesses, and federal and local government agencies rented booth space at the career fair. Amazon.com, CSX Transportation, General Electric, Home Depot, Tyson Foods, UPS and Anthem were there, as were representatives from the Transportation Safety Administration, the Secret Service, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the departments of Labor, Commerce and Veterans Affairs.

"We are recruiting nationally right now for a lot of our consumer bank positions: tellers, personal bankers, managers," said Josh Renick, a staffing manager for Bank of America. "We've had tremendous success at military events."

Dan Dellinger, who chairs The American Legion National



*Active-duty servicemembers talk with Secret Service representatives during the Heroes to Hometowns Transition and Benefits Fair at the 91st National Convention in Louisville, Ky. Tom Strattman*

Economic Commission, said career fairs like the one in Louisville are critical right now.

"In this economic climate, we need more of these everywhere," he said. "They're important for the veterans out there, and they're also important for those just now separating (from the military)."

Dellinger wasn't surprised by the quality of the vendors who had booths in Louisville. "I think these companies realize that the training a servicemember gets, along with the discipline they have, is what people want in an employee," he said.

"They want people who can think on their feet."

About four hours into the career fair's first day, more than 300 prospective job applicants had already attended; Jonathan Lovett, who planned to leave the Marine Corps in November, was among them.

"I think this is a very good thing for veterans and a good thing for active-duty guys," said Lovett, who served at Recruiting Station Louisville. "When you apply online, you are throwing pebbles in a pond. Here, you get face to face. You get to talk to someone. You're more than just a number or a piece of paper."



[LEGIONNAIRES IN ACTION]

## Open Your Heart helps needy families enjoy Christmas

*“We intend to solicit the help of those persons who might not care to assume a large responsibility but who can help a little. We can supply leadership for the general public in a work which enlists the sympathy of everyone.”*

— A.D. McKinnon

With those words, the commander of American Legion Lloyd Spetz Post 1 in Bismarck, N.D., launched its Open Your Heart campaign in December 1930 to help area families in need at Christmas.

Post 1's current commander, Ben Kemp, says the Legion continues to provide leadership and organization for Open Your Heart, but tremendous community support is the key to the program's resounding success 80 years later.

“In the month of December, we will raise over \$60,000,” says Bob Wefald, program chairman and past post commander. “Schoolchildren will donate an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 non-perishable food items, then hundreds of volunteers will sort the donated food items, fill food baskets, and deliver them to about 350 families in need.”

Nearly half of the \$60,000 in donations is raised each December in one 12-hour period, Wefald says. Radio station KFYR does a live broadcast from a local mall on the first Saturday in December. This month marks the station's 24th consecutive broadcast for Open Your Heart.

Donated funds are used to purchase produce, fresh and frozen food, and canned goods. The money is also used to buy clothes for the families.

On Dec. 22, about 100 volunteers will sort and stack the food in a large exhibit hall provided by the Bismarck Civic Center. That evening, food baskets will be assembled by 300 to 400 volunteers. The following day, volunteer drivers will pick up baskets and deliver them to several families. By about 10 a.m., deliveries will be finished, and Lloyd Spetz Post 1 will start planning next year's campaign.

“This is absolutely the most satisfying volunteer work I've ever done,” Wefald says. “This has been touching the lives of so many families and volunteers since December 1930. It's an incredible testimony to the farsightedness of our World War I-era Legionnaires, and to the positive impact Open Your Heart makes every Christmas.”

Legionnaires in Bismarck think their annual Open Your Heart project may be the longest-running American Legion Christmas charity in the country.

### [EDUCATION]

## Samsung scholars win \$20,000 each

The Samsung National Selection Committee has selected 11 students as 2009 Samsung American Legion Scholars. Each will receive a \$20,000 scholarship for undergraduate studies.

In 1996, electronics giant Samsung endowed a scholarship fund of \$5 million to be administered by The American Legion, to show appreciation for the sacrifices of U.S. troops during the Korean War. Since then, the fund has blossomed, creating the largest college scholarship the Legion awards.

Samsung American Legion scholarships go to high school juniors who complete a Boys State or Girls State program, and are direct descendants (or legally adopted children) of a wartime veteran who was or is eligible for American Legion membership. Winners are selected according to academic record, involvement in school and community activities, community service and financial need. Applicants who are direct descendants of Korean War veterans receive special consideration.

### 2009 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

**Nathan K. Mickinac,**  
New Manchester, W.Va.

**Brett R. Ubl,** New Ulm, Minn.

**Shanna Myers,** Eugene, Ore.

**Kendra Hertz,** Billings, Mont.

**Parry J. Draper,** Mascoutah, Ill.

**Robert J. Seigfried,**  
Mexico, Miss.

**Colby M. Tharpe,** Hodges, S.C.

**Luke Sundquist,**  
Bridgewater, Va.

**Julie Micalizzi,**  
Colorado Springs, Colo.

**Megan R. Newman,**  
Star City, Ind.

**John B. Harringa,**  
Hawthorn Woods, Iowa

## [ECONOMICS]

## Rediscover the small-business formula

Business, all business, must adhere to a fundamental basic formula: *money in – money out = profit*. When it comes to generating revenue, you have to have something to sell, someone has to be

willing to buy it, you have to locate the people willing to buy your product or service, and finally, you have to ask them to give you their money. That's

more difficult than it sounds.

■ *Most of the clients I work with have identified what they want to sell, but assigning a strategy market value to their offering is much more of a challenge.*

Figuring out just how much money, time (translated into money) and effort (translated into money) goes into getting your widget into the hands of the customer requires a lot of thought.

■ *Identify your target customer.* Knowing you'll have customers and understanding exactly who they are going to be are two completely different things. You must know everything about your perfect customer and who they are giving your money to (yes, your money). Your job is to convince them to shop with you.

■ *Once you have identified your customer with distinctive intimacy, you have to let them know you exist.*

■ *Depending on the price point of your offering, you will have to be able to sell, and close sales.* This is usually the biggest emotional challenge for new entrepreneurs. Many of us feel uncomfortable or even dishonest asking others to turn over their money to us.

If you start your business planning understanding these basic principles, you will soon be able to set realistic goals and a solid revenue forecast.

*Louis J. Celli Jr. is a retired Army master sergeant who has started and developed businesses, and has counseled hundreds of veteran entrepreneurs. Readers can send questions for "On Point" to [lcelli@nevbr.org](mailto:lcelli@nevbr.org).*

## ON POINT



VETERANS & BUSINESS  
BY LOUIS J. CELLI JR.

## [IMMIGRATION]



Tina Fineberg/The Peopling of America

## The Peopling of America

For over a century, Ellis Island has been recognized as the gateway to U.S. citizenship and the freedoms that come with it. Even today, it remains a symbol of opportunity, where 12 immigrants recently took the oath of citizenship in a special naturalization ceremony. Ten of the 12 became citizens through military service.

Over the next two years, a \$20 million expansion project will take shape on the island to more fully celebrate our nation's immigrant history. The Peopling of America Center will expand beyond the Ellis Island era (1892-1954) to cover the stories of those who arrived before Ellis as well as those who arrived post-1954, right up to today. Fundraising is still under way, with support from Bank of America Charitable Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation.

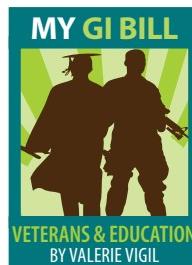
Learn more about Ellis Island and the project online.

🌐 [www.ellisisland.org](http://www.ellisisland.org)

## [EDUCATION]

## Switch from Chapter 30 to Chapter 33 allowed

**Q:** If I have already used part or all of my education benefits, am I still eligible to switch to the Post-9/11 GI Bill?



VETERANS & EDUCATION  
BY VALERIE VIGIL

**A:** Yes. Under both chapters, you are eligible for 36 months of full-time benefits. Even if you have used some of your educational benefits, you can still elect to switch from Chapter 30 (the Montgomery GI Bill) to Chapter 33 (the Post-9/11 GI Bill). Whatever amount of entitlement has been used will be subtracted from the total 36 months of entitlement available. However, if you exhaust your Chapter 30 benefits completely, you can apply for an additional 12 months under Chapter 33. This is

only available if there are zero days benefits left under Chapter 33. Only apply for Chapter 33 once you know you have no more days of entitlement.

Remember, if you have attended classes at the full-time rate and have used 10 months of entitlement, your remaining entitlement will be less than 10 months of used time.

*Valerie Vigil, a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Arizona, serves as vice president of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators. Send GI Bill questions to her by e-mail: [askvalerie@legion.org](mailto:askvalerie@legion.org)*



[PERSONAL COMPUTING]

# IT'S A SMALL WORLD, AFTER ALL

BY REID GOLDSBOROUGH



What's the optimal size of a personal computer? That's a question PC makers wrestle with all the time in designing new models, and it's a question every PC buyer should consider as well.

The trend is clear: small. For the most part, stationary desktop PCs as well as portable PCs have gotten smaller over time, one exception being monitors, which have increased in size.

When taken to an extreme today, you wind up with a handheld computer, also called a palmtop computer. Taken to an extreme in the future, we'll likely have fully functional, voice-activated, talking computers embedded in our wristwatches, clothing and eyeglasses. Futurists even write of computers being embedded in our bodies and eventually, when science truly marries science fiction, the melding of carbon and silicon in hybrid beings that are part human and part robot.

For now, the more mundane and more practical issue is how small you should go when buying a new computer device for work, play, or both.

A relatively new category of computer devices, netbooks, adds a new option. Also called mini-notebooks or sub-notebooks, these are the smallest computers today that have keyboards that you can type into with both hands for quick data entry. Unlike notebook PCs, they don't typically include a CD-ROM/DVD drive.

The name "netbook" came into use because these devices are ideally suited for using Web applications. Instead of running programs that reside on your computer's hard drive, you run programs over the Internet that reside on servers elsewhere. Google Docs is the best known.

Netbooks as a product category are only about two years old, emerging in late 2007. They've caught on, comprising nearly one-fourth of all portable PCs sold, according to the latest report by DisplaySearch. Compared with a year ago, netbook sales revenue grew a whopping 264 percent. Compared with other laptop computers, they're lighter, run longer on battery power, and cost less. The main negatives are the flip side of the positives. The smaller keyboards are more difficult to type on and the smaller screens are more difficult to read.

Some analysts have speculated that the netbook boom will end when the economy recovers, removing some of the attraction of their low price, which ranges from about \$250 to \$500. But market research firm iSuppli Corp. predicts that their popularity will continue to rise, with netbook shipments projected to quadruple over the next four years.

Top netbook brands, according to the latest testing by Consumer Reports, *PC World*, and the online sites CNET and NetbookReviews.com, include those by Acer, Asus, Gateway, HP and Toshiba.

Most netbooks come with Windows XP as their operating system, though you can find them with Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Linux. The MacBook Air is Apple's answer to the netbook trend, but it's considerably pricier than Windows or Linux netbooks.

Here are some observations from netbook users, picked up from online discussion groups: netbooks are good for just about anything except video editing. Typing speed increases with keyboard size, and typing error rate decreases. You're more likely to take a netbook than a notebook with you when out casually. A netbook is convenient even if you rarely take it out of the house, in moving it from room to room.

According to what I've observed, younger people take to netbooks more easily than bifocal folks. If you're used to texting on an iPod or cell phone, a netbook will seem positively roomy. But if you want to optimize ergonomic comfort and safety as well as speed and efficiency when working, nothing beats a full-size stationary desktop computer.

*Reid Goldsborough is a syndicated columnist and author of the book "Straight Talk About the Information Superhighway."*  
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Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

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The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life mem-

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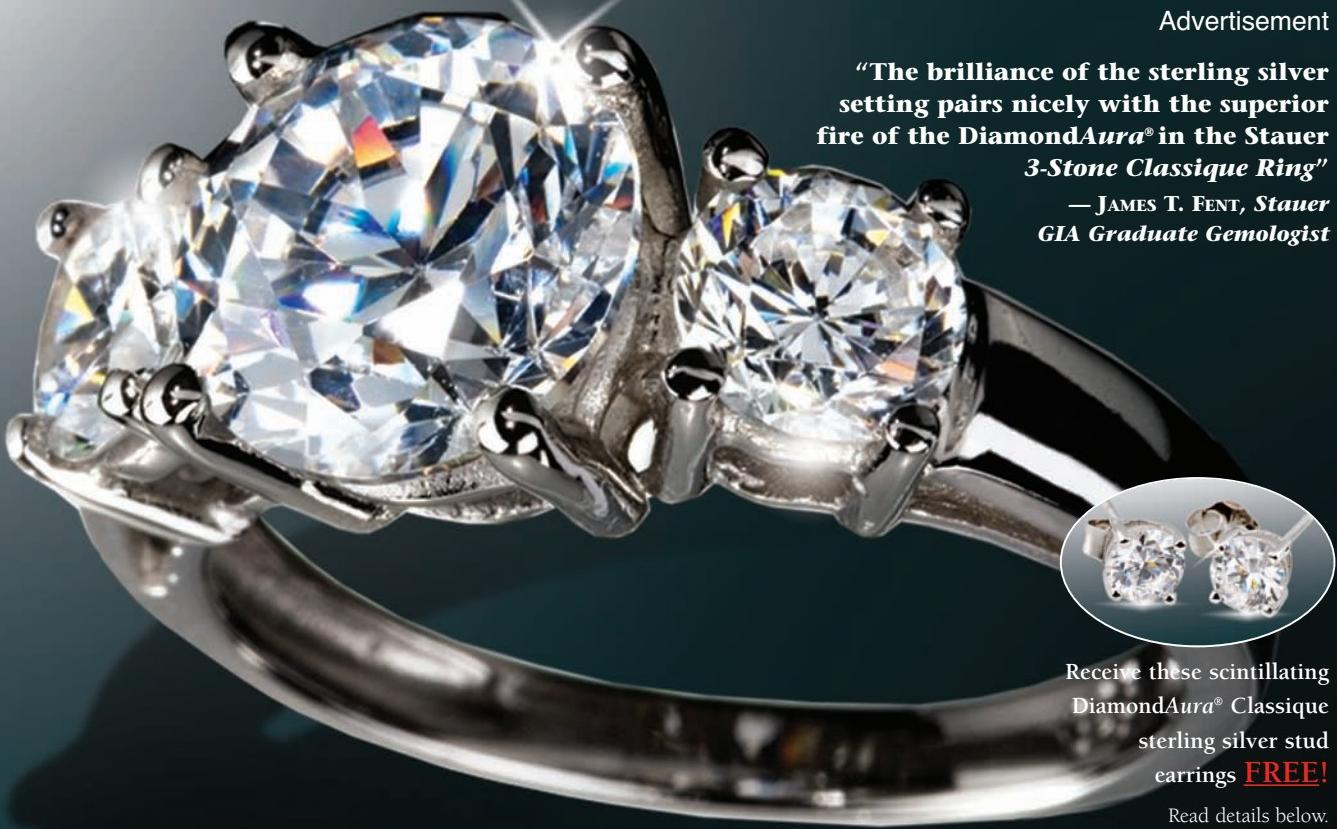
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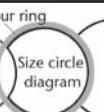
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14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2009
15. Extent and nature of circulation:

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a. Total No. of Copies Printed .....	2,319,519	2,331,490
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
1. Paid/Requested Outside-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 .....	2,311,184	2,323,129
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3. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution .....	4,312	4,323
4. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS .....	0	0
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b (1),(2), (3), and (4)) .....	2,315,496	2,327,452
d. Free distribution by mail		
1. Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541 .....	3,094	3,100
2. In-County as Stated on Form 3541 .....	0	0
3. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS .....	0	0
e. Free distribution outside the mail .....	0	0
f. Total Free distribution (Sum of 15d and 15e) .....	3,094	3,100
g. Total distribution (Sum of 15c and 15f) .....	2,318,590	2,330,552
h. Copies not distributed .....	929	938
i. Total (Sum of 15g and h.) .....	2,319,519	2,331,490
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## PARTING SHOTS

**Christmas is a holiday during which neither the past nor the future is of as much interest as the present.**

**AS A LITTLE GIRL** climbed onto Santa's lap, he asked the usual question: "And what would you like for Christmas?"

The child stared at him open-mouthed, then gasped, "Didn't you get my e-mail?"

**IF YOU WANT** to hear people say "Merry Christmas," why not visit a church instead of a store?

**AFTER FINISHING** his examination, the doctor looked at his patient and said, "I can't find the exact cause of your trouble, Mr. Smith, but it's probably due to drinking too much."

The patient looked at the doctor and replied, "Gee, I'm sorry to hear that, Doc. I'll come back when you're sober."

**IN THE DAYS** of the Berlin Wall, there was a little old man who crossed the checkpoint every week, pushing his bicycle and carrying a heavy sack. The border guard, suspecting him of smuggling, always searched the sack thoroughly but never found anything worthwhile.

One day, after the wall came down, the guard ran into the little old man.

"Look, I just know you were smuggling something all those years, but I could never prove it," the guard said. "Tell me what it was."

The little old man chuckled. "Bicycles."



"Gentlemen, I've just seen the quarterly reports, and believe me, I am not wagging my tail."



"And now you can follow my round-the-world flight on Twitter."



"I'll see your Social Security supplement and raise you a Medicare card and a Canadian pharmacy ID."

**FATHER CALLING** to his daughter as her date took a seat on the couch: "Oh, dreamboat! Your barnacle is here!"

**DURING A LONG LECTURE**, a speaker suffered many interruptions from a man in the balcony who kept yelling, "Louder! Louder!"

After the fifth interruption, a gentleman in the first row stood up, looked back and asked, "Can't you hear?"

"No, actually, I can't hear," came the answer from the balcony.

"Well, then, be thankful and shut up!"

**"PRESIDENT OBAMA** has an idea to make our country smarter. He wants to shorten summer vacation and extend the school year. I don't want to be cynical, but clearly this is a back-door deal for the powerful Tater Tot lobby." — Jimmy Kimmel



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